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Prophet and Mantic as Illustrated by the Pericope of Balaam

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Abstract
The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between prophecy and mantic (divination) in the ANE in general, with special reference to the enigmatic personality of Balaam, as described in the Bible (Nu 22:2 - 24). It was formerly believed that prophecy and magic were two entirely different, even mutually exclusive, phenomena which had almost nothing in common. This somewhat simple fundamentalist view asserted that the prophet spoke God's word, whereas the magician carried out, so to speak, the Devil's work. Modern research has shown that such a view is an unpermissible oversimplification. It can be shown that both prophecy and mantic have a common source and background in divination, in that time-honored answer to the very natural human desire of obtaining a knowledge of the future Both of them go a long way together, in spite of their very different methods employed.

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PROPHET AND MANTIC AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE PERICOPÉ OF BALAAM

by

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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PROPHET AND MANTIC AS ILLUSTRATED BY THE PERICOPE OF BALAAM

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Introduction

1. Prophecy and Mantic: Contrasts and Affinities

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between prophecy and mantic (divination) in the ANE in general, with special reference to the enigmatic personality of Balaam, as described in the Bible (Nu 22:2 – 24). It was formerly believed that prophecy and magic were two entirely different, even mutually exclusive, phenomena which had almost nothing in common. This somewhat simple fundamentalist view asserted that the prophet spoke God’s word, whereas the magician carried out, so to speak, the Devil’s work. Modern research has shown that such a view is an unpermissible oversimplification. It can be shown that both prophecy and mantic have a common source and background in divination, in that time-honored answer to the very natural human desire of obtaining a knowledge of the future. Both of them go a long way together, in spite of their very different methods employed. The aim of our investigation is to determine how far there exists an affinity between them, where exactly their ways do part, and finally, their differences and wider implications in the sphere of religion. If prophecy and mantic are, to a certain extent, only two different aspects of basically one and the same phenomenon, could not a man have experienced both of them simultaneously or even have been in a state of suspense between them?
2. The Difficulties of Research

The relationship between prophecy and mantic must have been very important in Biblical times. It is actually by the clash of these two fundamental forces that almost all the essential features of Biblical religion, as ethics, law, history, worship, view of life—appear in contrast and outright opposition to religions. Therefore, the characteristic teachings of the Bible, its revolutionary message, its protest against the prevailing role and meaning of religion in man's life, can be very well understood if brought out in terms of the contrast between prophecy and magic.

The Bible asserts that it contains the word of Yhwh, the god of Israel, announced by his prophets for Israel's sake, and ultimately for the sake of the whole of mankind. Thus without prophets and prophecy, there would be neither message nor Bible at all. Now the contrasts between the Bible and its ANE environment can be worked out in several ways: by the content of their messages, by analyzing their religious experiences, or by comparing their impacts on their followers. A basically religious approach, which was the attitude of pre-critical interest in Biblical studies, was naturally more interested in the message of the Bible itself, neglecting almost entirely the other aspects. The scientific approach, however, will ask the following question: does the criterion of 'true' and 'false' apply to the moral validity and pertinence of the message or to the authenticity of the prophet's experience? In other words, do these criteria apply to the content of the prophecy, or to its inspiration?
There existed what may be termed 'prophets' outside Israel, as in Canaan and Mari, in addition to other types of men who believed themselves to be inspired by gods or other superhuman agencies. Here enters the diviner, the astrologer and the magician proper, whose message in the ANE, like in ancient times in general, was a very legitimate one (- and still is for many people even today.). The very simple terms of 'true' and 'false' cannot be applied here. After all, what do 'true' and 'false' mean here? A long time after the events have passed it seems quite easy to state that the 'true' prophets were 'right', and all the others were trying to "lead" astray" the people. But there are weighty objections to this unsophisticated view. First, several prophecies of the 'true' prophets did not materialize. Second, if the people had obeyed the so-called "false prophets" all the way, had, for instance, fought with utmost determination against the Babylonians before the destruction of the First Commonwealth, the course of history might have been very different. Actually, this question was most seriously asked by the people themselves in their discussion with the prophet Jeremia, after these events had passed. (Jer 44:15-19). Third, the 'false' as well as the 'true' prophets claimed to have been inspired and sent by Y.; according to Jer 28, the people must at that time have their most serious doubts whose claim was the legitimate one, as the inconclusive dialogue between Jeremia and Hananya pointedly shows.
3. The Difficulties of the Modern Rational Approach

The question becomes even more complex by modern man's inability or inadequacy, resulting from his purely rational attitude, to comprehend prophetic consciousness as such, even less the claim of divine inspiration, and then the process of transmission of an assumedly divine word to the mind and consciousness of a prophet or diviner. There seems to be very little in all these which is in any way comparable to the range of mental experience of modern man. Nor are there any sufficiently close similarities in the history of religion and religious experience which could be used for comparison and explanation such as would bring us nearer to any real understanding of these phenomena, especially prophecy. The various theories concerning the character of prophecy advanced, medieval as well as modern, seem to us unconvincing. Nor must we make the common mistake of some modern writers to popularize prophecy, by terming prophets religious, social or political reformers and revolutionaries, not very unlike their modern counterparts. They were certainly all these—but they were also much more. The issues at stake, mainly those concerned with the explanation of prophecy as a religious phenomenon, are by such a treatment liable to become unduly narrowed and often consciously obscured, whereas they should be dealt with strictly on their own terms in its "Eigengeschichte." Thus purely rationalistic interpretations prove insufficient to do justice to the complex phenomenon of Biblical prophecy.
4. The Method Suggested

However, there seems to be still another way of dealing with a possible solution of these rather difficult and complex problems. Prophecy and divination are dealt with in the Bible as contrasting forces, so that important conclusions can be drawn from their comparison. Thus the methods and meanings of both of them will become clearer, perhaps even more so when this contrast is brought out within one and the same person. To the best of our knowledge, such an attempt has not yet been made.

Not less important than the analysis of prophecy and divination as religious phenomena on the level of personal experience are their wider aspects: their theology, their teachings, their approach to human life and values, their practices; in short, how either one tried to influence the attitude and behaviour of its followers; and finally, their impact on ANE religion and history.

5. The Balaam Narrative: Biblical Prophecy contra ANE Divination and Magic

During the period of classical prophecy (ca. 770-450 B.C.E.), diviners as magicians, *dreamers* and 'false' prophets are often mentioned together (Jes 3:2-2, Micah 4:5-7, Jer 27:9, 29:8, Ez 13:9,23). But there is no personality among them which is described in any length, neither a 'false' prophet nor a magician. (Jer 28 is too short to admit of a closer analysis of Hananya; the same is true in Sam 28 of the Woman of En-Dor). On the other hand, there is a fairly
lengthy description of such a man in the Pentateuch, namely of Balaam (Nu 22-24). Now the astonishing thing is that his actions do not only seem to fit perfectly into the pattern of divination, but not less into that of prophecy - a combination which appears unbelievable at first sight, utterly contradictory. However, we will attempt to prove that many difficulties of exegesis and interpretation so far could not be satisfactorily explained by methods and assumptions of literary criticism can easily be solved once the mentality of a diviner as well as that of a prophet is comprehended. By those means, it will be possible to arrive at a new understanding of the Balaam Narrative, and its interpretation will be vastly different from previous attempts. This will be important not only for the exegesis of this narrative; but once its origin has been assigned to a certain period, with any certainty, as far as this can be done, it may shed important light on basic issues of Israelite prophecy, not the least on its relation to Mantic, one of the main forces of ANE religions.
Chapter 1: The Role of the Diviner

Chapter 1: Part I

The Role of the Diviner

1. Phenomena and Gods in the ANE

2. The Dilemma of ANE

3. The Diviner and the Omen

4. Extraordinary Faculties of Diviners

5. Blessings and Curses
Chapter 1: The Role of the Diviner

1. Phenomena and Gods in the ANE

1. Man in the ANE lived in a conceptual world vastly different from that of modern man. The physical nature in its various manifestations which surrounded him everywhere in his daily work and life was something overwhelming to him, terrifying in its impact upon him because of his utter dependence upon it. As he did not possess a knowledge of natural laws as such, he had no way of understanding their working. He was unable to reduce them by an inductive process of thinking to physical laws. Therefore, the unpredictable behaviour of natural powers was conceived by him, in a way, as an other mode of human behavior; nature was thus conceived by him in terms of his own human condition. He therefore, externalized and personified natural causes and called them by the names of gods. These "gods" acted very much like human beings, motivated by their unpredictable tempers and moods. According to this way of thinking, also called mythopoetic thoughts, similar to the mythological, pre-rational thinking of pre-philosophical Greece, gods were believed to be the "behind, phenomena: gods of thunder, lightning, rain and storms, and goddess of fertility, a god of heaven, a goddess of the earth, a god of the sea; but also a god of death and the nether world. This list could be continued almost indefinitely. Such a god might also be a demon or a ghost who - not: which! - might be sometimes very beneficial to man, but at other times equally disastrous to him.
2. The Dilemma of ANE Man

Living in a situation like this, ANE man, realizing at once his absolute, unconditional dependence on these gods, must have been living in constant fear of their actions which at any moment might become adverse to him. After all, what could he do against sudden illness in his family? Or death among his herds, or destruction of his crops, all of them vital to his subsistence? Therefore he had no alternative but somehow to come to terms with these gods. As their actions were conceived by him to be subjective, voluntary, the gods had always to be propitiated in a way similar to a king or governor - in whose power, life and death of his subjects lay. The benevolence and love of these gods had therefore always to be bought and assumed by gifts and sacrifices, by temples built to them in which they were properly worshipped. So far so good - as long as the gods regulated nature in such a way that it would enable man to live prosperous and satisfied.

If however, matters did not turn out the way desired, and the gods, controlling the vast powers of nature, had brought upon him drought or storms, sickness, pestilence or war, ANE man felt that he must in some way have offended them, or that a full rapport had, by some errors on his part, failed to be established. It was therefore of utmost importance to ANE man to find out how his gods would act, and how this would influence his life. Now any rational thinking would at once have given him the only possible answer that this is simply beyond human understanding. Modern thought, rational and scientific, would see the only solution in finding out the laws of nature,
the causes of diseases, the laws which govern, e.g., the formation of thunderstorms, thus making the need for these gods superfluous. But ANE man, unable to arrive at objective natural laws, nonetheless did not want, was possibly emotionally unable, to content himself with a state of resignation. Where knowledge is humanly impossible and results are unobtainable, man, obsessed by the idea of the desired end, somehow overleaps the unassumable span between question and answer, the gap between present failure and future success, by which the unobtainable can nevertheless be obtained.5

3. The Diviner and the Omen

There seem to have always been people of a peculiar frame of mind, prone to extraordinary psychic states, claiming to possess knowledge beyond that accessible to average, normal human beings. These might be termed seers, diviners, ecstatics, dreamers, prophets. They would in fact include anyone who professed to be able to interpret a sign sent by a god, or to reveal a god’s intention by any other means, or to speak a god’s words; (“god” here used as defined before); in short, any revelation from a sphere beyond that accessible to ordinary human beings. Any knowledge about a god is a secret to man, and whosoever is able to reveal any of it for man’s purpose and benefit will show him a way out of his aforementioned dilemma.

One of the widely used means in the ANE of obtaining knowledge of future events was the interpretation of omens, signs believed to have been sent by the gods. They had of course to be understood the right way, which in itself constituted an
art, even a science, to be carefully studied and practised by the initiated only, specialists in their field.

Omens, it was believed, could be detected in an astonishing wide area of life: in any rarity or abnormality among animals and man, in any exceptional meteorological phenomenon, in any unusual event. The idea behind the omen was that anything uncommon would forebode a certain change, assuming that a hidden connection existed between these two, which could be detected. Special importance was attached to dreams, because of their believed suprasensuous, or perhaps rather ultrasensuous nature; for the same reasons, the ghosts of the dead would be employed, by which gods would make their intentions known to man. Sometimes, for "invited" omens, hepatoscopy, casting of lots and belomancy were practised. The recognition and significance of an omen was indeed the essence of divination.

Generally speaking, a divination would predict either good or bad tidings. In the latter case, the next step was to find a way to prevent this turn of a situation, or in ANE concepts, to dissuade a god from following his course detrimental to man. Thus, preventive measures had to be resorted to.

At this point, various methods might be used. Either a god could be dissuaded by a prayer or a cultic act like a sacrifice, or the god might be circumvened altogether by a magical formula. This was to be recited by the one to be afflicted, or, even better, by a diviner or magician, whose spell would be regarded more potent.

6. Extraordinary Faculties of Divinners
The modern attitude to divination and magic may think
lightly of the potency of a diviner or magician. However, it cannot be doubted that there were always people of extraordinary mental powers who exerted tremendous influence upon their fellow-men because they were believed to be able to use these powers very effectively. Even taking into account that out of a large number of cases they succeeded only in relatively few, this might have been just enough to create around them a reputation of awe, fear and even terror. Granting the possible influence of a personality extraordinary in his insight into matters and understanding the character of men, still something more must be accounted for before such persons can be dismissed as charlatans. There must somehow be more to it than the implicit belief of people in them.

For instance, to some of them powers of healing have been ascribed. Again the fact is undeniable that people believed themselves to have been healed by them, is undeniable. Modern psychology has attempted to explain their uncanny powers. As far as alleviation of pain and healing are concerned it has been claimed that these persons were capable of activating the will-power of their patients to overcome their disease, or, more exactly, to overcome the often unconscious, purely psychological factor of certain diseases. (In modern medicine, this is a factor well-known to contribute greatly to, even to generate, the so-called psychosomatic diseases.)

In ancient times, many physicians possessed most probably these powers to a greater or lesser degree, and the people who were unable to understand rationally the sources of powers
of such a man - would call him a performer of miracles, and
give him names or titles of similar kind. This state of affairs
continued during the medieval ages, even does so to the present:
faith healing might be a case in point. In Judaism, the per-
petuation of miracle-performing rabbis among modern Hassidim
might be mentioned. It is actually bound to be so in any
society in which healing has not yet become exclusively a
science, or in any social layer in which the belief in the
healing power of an extraordinary personality is greater than
the belief in the often impersonal modern science of medicine
in which the patient's personality is secondary to his physical
and chemical condition. Popular belief ascribed these healing
faculties to a divine influence upon, or a divine source of,
the healer. He, of course, would be the last to deny that,
even if he knew that this was not the case, lest the belief
in him and his healing power would be shaken so that it would
make his work impossible.
Blessings and Curses

1. In the ANE it was believed that blessings and curses, once pronounced, would materialize if their efficacy could not be counteracted. The basic idea of the more primitive mind was that the curse (or the blessing) is the spoken word. It was believed that the spoken wish could be easily changed to the realized fact by appropriate means, and therefore the spoken word was regarded nearer the goal to be attained than the wish. As the curse is, as it were, charged with injurious, destructive energy, the fateful word once pronounced was regarded as automatic or self-fulfilling, therefore as irrevocable. (The same holds good, of course, for a blessing.) Another belief was that a curse might sometimes return to the man who uttered it, on to his descendants. These rather fluid categories of thought are rather characteristic of pre-logical modes of thought. The underlying belief is that the spoken word, particularly in curses, possesses a quasi-magical potency of its own. As will be shown, the Bible does not share this belief, as it does not recognize this potency.

2. According to the beliefs outlined, several factors would increase the efficacy of a curse or a blessing.

1/ Whenever it was accompanied by a strong emotional display by the pronouncer. Then the people present would keenly feel its strength of wish and the at least psychologically almost realized fact.

2/ Sympathetic or symbolic action towards its realization, as appropriate gestures and words.
3/ Touching by the bestower (of a blessing), destroying a figure or a symbol associated with the person (to be cursed), during the pronunciation. 'Seeing' could replace 'touching' or 'destroying', especially when done from a distance.  

4a/ Superiority of personal power or status in relation to the person to be blessed or cursed, as e.g. parents; special occasions, as e.g. dying persons, before their death.  

5a/ When pronounced by men experienced or even 'professionally' in touch with the supernatural, religions or magical, like prophets, diviners, magicians, sorcerers. (These people were of course regarded as more efficacious than ordinary men and women.)  

6/ If it was pronounced by a god, or at least had his consent.  

3. As can easily be seen, all these points substantially contribute to the explanation of the fact why it was Balaam who was called from a distance country for the task to curse Israel in the name of Y. At the same time one can realize to what kind of man this Balaam must have been and what kind of impression he must have made on his contemporaries: an extraordinary personality, famous and feared alike for the power attributed to the pronunciation of his curses, probably not less of his blessings.  

The efficacy of the mere words is naturally enhanced by the mystery of power inherent in the personality of the utterer, particularly when believed to use a god's power. In the case of Balaam, the question was of course whether he was 'strong'.
Notes to: Chapter 1, Part 1


2. Ibid, p. 12

3. Ibid 13-14

4. Ibid. 25-26


6. Cf. ch. 1, part 2, #3 and 4


8. Cf. the Talmudic view that the spoken word has a power of its own, b. Brakhot 19a, 56a


10. Crowley 12

11. Crowley 7, 8
enough to curse Israel in the name of their god. Here the
great importance of the name in general, much more so of the
divine name of the god of Israel, has to be taken into account.

4. The beliefs in the power of spoken curses and blessings
in the ANE is rather different from the views expressed in the
Bible, which makes their efficacy dependent on the will of Y.
Therefore they are reduced to mere human wishes whose fulfil-
ment reflects not so much the aim of the pronouncer, even less
his potency, but the justice of Y. who decides whether a person
is worthy to blessed or cursed. Thus only an uttering pro-
nounced with the consent of Y. or in his name could be effi-
cacious. Against Y.'s will, a blessing or curse would ex-
press nothing but the wish of the pronouncer; Y. might even
turn an unjustified curse into a blessing (Ps 109:28). There-
fore the only thing a man could do was to expect Y. to fulfill
his wish, or to pray to him for that.

Thus the concept of the omnipotence of Y. and his just
judgement virtually annuls the quasimagical power of curses
and blessings.

5. Some commentators assume that the belief in the power
of the spoken blessing or curse is also found in the Bible.
As proofs are adduced the blessing of Isaak and the oracles
of Balaam.

As to the first, Gen 27:33 is then understood that Isaak,
recognizing he had already pronounced the blessing to Jacob,
could neither revoke nor annul it. But the test

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\textit{\textsuperscript{25}}
Isaak a flash of insight by which he realized that what he had unwittingly done was in fact the will of Y., who had brought it about in such a way—and therefore, Isaak endorsed his blessing. This interpretation is secured by the subsequent relation of Isaak to Jacob, as in chs. 27 and 28:1-5.

6. Similarly, from the intervention of Y. to change Balaam's curses into blessings as expressed in Dt 23:6 and Jos 24:10, it is assumed that if Balaam had only succeeded in pronouncing his curses they would have materialized, so that, so to speak, Y. had no choice but to act as he did. But if Y. possessed the power to force Balaam to pronounce that which he, Y., wanted him to say, then he certainly had also the power to bless Israel notwithstanding Balaam's curses.

Moreover, the reason why Y. "did not want to agree to Balaam" and therefore forced him to change his curses into blessings is based on the central motif of the narrative, namely the attempt of a prophet of Y. to rebel against him. It was not only that he was unable to achieve his aim, but Y. decided, as a just judge, that because of Israel's righteousness the curses were not justified. (This point will be explained in full in the last chapter.) Finally, the instigators of the intended curses, Balaq and the Moabites, caused them to return to them, since they were not justified to curse Israel. This retribution is announced by Balaam, then speaking as a prophet in the name of Y., to be brought about at a later time by Y., the just judge. For this connection of the fourth oracle with the narrative, ch. 9.
Notes to: Chapter 1, Part 1


14. Perhaps ra'āh b-", to see the destruction of one's enemy, as in Ps 22:18, 54:9, 112:8, is based on this idea.

15. Crawley 17

16. The blessings of Isaac, Jacob and Moses. For a modern parallel, cf. the words of dying John Gaunt in Shakespeare's Richard II.

17. Crawley 19

18. For the different formulations of curses in Mesopotamia and Biblical (West Semitic) literature see Brichto 12.

19. Crawley 36. This is the only reason stated for which Balaam was called by Balaq, Nu 22:6.

20. See ch. 9
Notes to: Chapter 1 Part 1 (cont'd)

22. M.D. Cassuto in Encyclopedia Mi'qra'ith II 357

23. The interesting feature of the Bible is that in spite of its concept of blessing and curse, its origin in magical practices can still clearly be discerned (Hempel and Mowinckel apud Brichto 4). This is only natural because the Bible developed from these views which it later fought. - The Balaam Narrative presents an ideal text for the substantiation of this view. Argument.

24. Crawley 38


26. M.D. Cassuto, ibid. 357

27. Cassuto ibid. 357

28. Brichto, 7-8: "The outstanding phenomenon in Israel is the battle to suppress sorcery and witchcraft, to subordinate all powers to their source in Y." This was doubtlessly one of the motifs to include the Balaam Narrative in the Pentateuch. Cf. ch. 9."
Chapter 1: The Role of the Diviner

Chapter 1: Part II

Divination in the ANE

1. Divination and Magic in Babylonia
2. The Diffusion of Babylonian Magic
3. The Intellectual Basis of Divination
4. Omen Texts
5. Hepatoscopy - The Writing of the Gods
6. The ANE Concept of "a god" as Opposed to the Modern Concept of "God"
7. Anthropopatheia and Anthropomorphism of ANE Gods
8. The bāru
9. The Functions of the bāru
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11. The ṣạ'īlu, āpīlu, sabru and mahḫū
12. Types of Divination Similar to the bāru and mahḫū among NW Semites
13. The Role of the Diviner
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Divination in the ANE

1. Divination and Magic in Babylonia

Ancient Babylonia has been called the classical country of divination and magic. There, it was believed that the cosmic order and natural processes were subjected to the rule of many gods, and that human ingenuity was capable of finding means and ways not only to gain insight into this divine system of controls so as to predict future events, but even to impose its own will upon these gods, so as to change the course of future events. Thus magical techniques developed side by side with divination; in the course of time, both were perfected to a very high degree. Altogether, this is perhaps not very much exaggerated if one considers that this pseudo-scientific approach was applied not only to theology but to medicine and astrology as well. As particularly the latter/last affected virtually all aspects of daily life, there was finally almost nothing left of human existence which did not come in one way or the other under the influence of these subjects. As both divination and magic were regarded as theology, they occupied a central position in Babylonian religion, and became perhaps its most typical expression.

2. The Diffusion of Babylonian Magic

Outside its proper geographical boundaries, Babylonian magic (and divination) was highly regarded even by the Assyrian culture, which took over so much from the Babylonians, was likewise greatly influenced by these beliefs and practices, as proved by the great number of cuneiform tablets dealing with this genre found there. In the archives of the
Hittite kings, omen texts in Akkadian and Hittite have been found, and there can be little doubt that some forms of Babylonian magic spread, together with its language and culture, to the Arameans and Canaanites, including the peoples of Southern Transjordan. It is assumed that hepatoscopy, one of the methods of Babylonian divination, found its way via Asia Minor to the Etruscan diviners (known as haruspices) and from there to the Graeco-Roman world. In later times, after Babylonia had ceased to exist, Chaldean diviners, as they were then called, came to Syria and from there to other Mediterranean countries. The so-called "Chaldean Wisdom" survived even the classical period and was famous, or rather infamous also during the Middle Ages.

Note: It perhaps even extended to Egypt, if Is 19:3 refers to Canaanite practices, which in turn were influenced by Babylonia. For a more ancient period, divination from a cup mentioned in Gen 44:5 might be adduced.

3. The Intellectual Basis of Divination

The use of divination and magic (was—primarily) has to be understood as a scientific approach, even if primitive, based on wrong assumptions and therefore unsuccessful, to find a key to the riddles of the universe, to the world of natural laws. It was believed that the proper interpretation of past and present would open a knowledge of the future. The Babylonians thought to have found that key in the interpretation of all kinds of unusual, prodigious happenings. So the subject to be studied was the extraordinary, rather than the ordinary, phenomenon, which was thought to be an
indicator of events to come if only correctly explained. Thus divination became a 'science.' This 'scientific' belief was based on the assumption that whatever unusual happens within the orbit of human perception occurs not only through specific, if unknown, causes, but also, at the same time, for the benefit of the observer as manifestation of a supernatural agent, a god.

4. Omen Texts

The texts dealing with these matters are commonly called Omen Texts, collections of which exist for almost the whole of Babylonian history, from the Old Babylonian period down to the Seleucids; no Semerian omen texts have so far been found. They cover cases of monstrous births among animals and man, physiognomic omens, rarely dream omens. The perhaps most famous branch became astrology which might be defined as divination applied to astronomy. Even medicine fell under the spell of divination, and it was assumed that peculiar features of a patient's body could be taken to indicate the name of the god or demon who caused the sickness, also whether the patient would survive or die.

But divination extended even to very ordinary everyday incidents and accidents of minor nature, as they were believed to be portents. So there are omens referring to cities, houses, or incidents in houses, behavior of animals, even insects, fire, politics, agriculture, encounters with wild animals and human beings. Moreover, hemerology was practiced, so that certain days were considered lucky or unlucky for certain
things to be done, business to be transacted, foundation stones to be laid, etc. It is not too much to state that there was probably not a single aspect of man's life which was not covered by fears, beliefs and practices of such kind.

5. Hepatoscopy - The Writing of the Gods

Once it was believed that unusual phenomena, after they had happened, could be understood as omens, man naturally wanted to find out if he could not attain some knowledge of future events by means of something already existing in the present, even if not exceptional. Was there anything in the sphere of man by which the gods would make known their future intentions? Thus a distinction has to be drawn between extraordinary events which had already taken place and as signs therefore lent themselves readily to an interpretation, and between those signs that could be read from something existing, but not necessarily exceptional. In ancient Mesopotamia the latter are rare, and the most practiced custom was hepastoscopy. (Oppenheim v.286 prefers the term extispicy, as, apart from the lóver, also additional intestines were looked into for this purpose) It was based on the assumption that the gods - in this case always Samaš - wrote his answers to the prayers and questions of the diviner then and there upon the intestines of the lamb, especially offered in order to elicit an answer to a given situation, and that it was possible to 'read' the answer by interpretation of certain formations and their deviations. There exist omens collections of all periods dealing especially with these interpretations.
It is important to add here that this technique was exclusively used for divination performed for the king and the army. This was the exclusive domain of the barū priest who would accompany the army on its campaigns as thus the intentions of the gods could be ascertained on the spot. (This is important for the Balaam Pericope because the text does not mention anything of this kind before the first and second oracle, nor anywhere else in the narrative.) A typical case is found in Ez 21:28, where Nebudhadnezzar used this means, together with two others, to determine the will of his god(s) which of two possible routes he should use to continue his campaign. (We follow here closely Oppenheim *IDBI* 286)

6. The ANE Concept of "a god" as Opposed to the Modern Concept of "God"

There exists an extreme difference in the ANE concept of "a god" and what in Western philosophy and theology is termed "God". Both the reasoning underlying divination (and the transition from it to magic) are unthinkable, even repugnant, to modern man whose ideas of "God" have been influenced decisively by the philosophical concept of monotheism. Already classical Greek philosophy exposed the primitive concept of a man-made, all-too-human god, ridiculing the ancient Greek mythological notions of the gods, thus making them altogether impossible. Especially the later teachings of philosophical monism as developed by Philo, the Aristotelians and Neoplatonists with their increased stress on pure monotheism, were immensely influential in molding Medieval and modern theological concepts of monotheism. They are worlds apart
from any of these ideas of a god, (which was often nothing but a demon, both called ‘ilu in Akkadian), as entertained by the Babylonians.

7. Anthropopathia and Anthropomorphism of ANE Gods

In order to understand the Babylonian concept of their gods it should be borne in mind that even they, the gods, were subjected to magical powers. They were likewise liable to be afflicted by demons who could cause them diseases and distress. The proofs are found in the Babylonian epics and myths which give us a clear picture how their gods were conceived of.

1. In the Epic of Creation (Enuma Elīs), Ea uses magical means to fight Apsu, and so does Tiamat to fight Marduk. The latter needs an apotropaic preventive to be able to resist Tiamat’s spell.

2. To prove his divine power in the council of gods, Marduk lets a garment be destroyed and then “be whole” — a simple trick of practical “magic”, as we would say. But it was accepted as a true credential of his divinity.

3. The fate of the world, of mankind, but also of the gods, was decreed once a year on the New Year’s day and inscribed on the “tablets of destiny” (tūp simītī). The god who possessed them had thus great power, also on other gods. But the stolen tablets could be taken away by force, and with them went apparently the power and the knowledge which went with them.
4. Demons, according to ANE views, were agents who caused all the evils in this world, as diseases, suffering etc. They were believed to possess such powers that they were capable of affecting even gods.

In other words, the Babylonians, believing that they were subjected to magical powers, projected their own human suffering and weakness into the concepts of their gods. To these gods were ascribed a theogony as crude as any, comparable e.g. to the classical Greek one by Hesiod. But then it was only natural that these gods could be coerced into giving away their secrets which they tried to keep away from man, and then into changing the course of events in a way more desirable to man. Moreover, the existence of many gods as such, of segmented and opposed powers, necessarily destroyed the assumption of the existence of one, all-powerful god. The belief in one predominant god, as Marduk or Assur, at a certain place and a certain time, could not overcome this basic feature of Babylonian theology, which is essentially the characteristic of any polytheistic system, of any pantheon.

This is by no means to be taken as a statement to the effect that this was the only attitude of the Babylonians to their gods. There exist hymns and prayers of real beauty in which the supplicant praised the god or goddess of his choice and asked him(or her) for favors, health, blessings, submitting himself to his (or her) greatness, wisdom, and judgement. But the element of magic seems never to be totally absent from the mind of the ancient Babylonian in his relation to his gods. Whether in sickness or any other trouble, he
would never pray without taking resort of magical devices to ward off or to fight the evil to which he was exposed.

8. **The bāru**

The baru was the Babylonian diviner par excellence. Whenever advice was sought on the future, on the will of the gods, it was he who was able to predict it by his power to see it, to envisage it, to predict it. He appears in many texts from earliest to latest times which, combined with his social function and position, must have made him an important figure in Babylonian society. The institution of the bāru already appears at the time of the first Babylonian Dynasty, where a guild of bārüti is mentioned; the titles of a rab bāru (chief bāru) and a mār bāru (member of the baru guild) should be mentioned as well.

The verb bāru means to see, behold, look at, investigate, test something. The question naturally arises whether the baru was also a visionary, a quasi-prophetical seer. Žemaré (BBR56) thinks that the term might have been limited to the seeing of omens, as e.g. of the intestines. Delitzsch's opinion (ibid) is affirmative, and some moderns tend to agree with him (e.g. Halder 1). This however, may have been different at various places and times.

As will be shown it was not so much the Babylonian bāru, than his counterpart, the Assyrian bāru, who had important characteristics in common with the biblical, rō'ēh, hōzēh, and hābi, at least at certain times.

There exists the legend of the ante-deluvian King.
Enmeduranki of Sippar who received in the divine council from Šamaš and Adad the tablets of fate (tuppu), the pouch (takāltu) containing the secrets of heaven and earth (bērūtu piristī or niširti) same u ersetim), and the staff of cedarwood (ērinu) (BBR 24.1.1ff). The staff was used for divining. The baru-priests derived their genealogy directly from this king.

The meaning of this legend is that divination was not regarded as a profane profession, but shrouded with secrecy (BBR 89). The barū is called "nasir piristi ilāni rabūti=he who keeps the secret of the great gods (ībiq). It was only the privileged barū who was permitted to perform it, and capable of successfully doing so. 36

9. The Functions of the barū

The main objective of the barū was to obtain a knowledge of the will of the gods, of fate decreed, and to communicate his results to his client, who very often was the king himself. The barū is the 'seer' in general, without reference to any special mode of divination. He had to be versed in many divinatory methods: extispicy (divination from entrails), or hepatoscopy (from the liver only), lecanomancy (divination from a cup into which oil was poured on water), hemerology, (divination as to (un)lucky days), divination from extraordinary phenomena of all kinds, astrology, and many more - all of which were thought to reveal the divine intention. The question whether they were equally practiced during various periods, answered by Oppenheim (Dreams 242) in the negative.

The service of the barū was especially used by the
King in order to ascertain the will of the gods in critical situations, such as whether to start a war or battle. In these cases, the oracle was obtained by hepatoscopy. Thus the bāru's influence on affairs of state could be very large, for it was he who would indeed decide any problem the king brought before him. Another service the bāru might render was most probably to cast a spell on the army of the enemy, or, in simpler words, to curse it; but this cannot so far be proved from ANE sources.

10. The Study of the Science of the bāru

Because of the complex nature of omen observation and interpretation, of the secret knowledge to be obtained from the gods, and finally of the magical means to be applied, these functions could be properly performed by specialists only. Originally the priest fulfilled these functions, in addition to his priestly ones. Later the bāru-priest became a bāru-diviner. An exclusive cast of bāru-priests developed, transmitting their secret knowledge from father to son, or only within their own inner circle. The one to be introduced into this science had to be healthy and of faultless appearance, without certain bodily defects. A prolonged and thorough study of the subjects involved was of course necessary before the novice would be admitted to the corporation of the bāru-priests. If he failed in his studies he would be barred from entering their guild. However, once allowed to practice his art, he would be fit "to perceive the sublimity of the seer" and to attain a great reputation.
As the subjects to be studied and their application were rather complex, separate classes of professionals developed in these fields.

11. The ša'īlu, apilu, šabru and mahhu

The functions of the ša'īlu and apilu have been dealt with by Oppenheim (Dreams 221):

"ša'īl(t)u means (s)he who asks questions" — i.e. of the gods. In other words, these priests belonged to the class of diviners; their function was to answer mantic inquiries by seeking oracles from the gods. This they apparently did by putting specific questions to the gods either by means of some oracular mechanism or in a manner appropriate to induce the divine powers to express their answer in a form which only the ša'īl(t)u was able to understand.

The use of the Akkadian term apālu, “to answer,” said of the response of the deity, has yielded the designation of some kind of diviner or perhaps "prophet" which appears in a text from Mari as (respectively) āpīlum and (for the female, SAL) apīlītum, (corresponding thus to ša'īlu and ša'īltu). The two-fold aspect of the function of the ša'īl(t)u (was) necromancy and the interpretation of dreams. The former occupation certainly contributed towards the deterioration of the social standing of this diviner," (Dreams 223)

The relationship between the ša'īlu and the bāru is summed up as follows (Dreams, 221):

"The ša'īlu is often mentioned beside the typical divination-expert, the bāru-priest, who, however, seems to have had
higher social standing, owing perhaps to his scholarly training, 
the organization of the bārū-priesthood or other, unknown rea-
sons. The two types of oracles-priests (bārū and ʾāʿilu) are 
mentioned side by side not only in religious texts but also in 
certain documents of daily life.

The ʾāʿilu was a divination-priest similar to the bārū. 
As to his relation ʾāʿilu to the bārū there are two opinions. By 
most, he is assumed to have been an interpreter of dreams. 
Haldar discusses the ʾāʿilu at length (17-21); also the female, 
šābratu, is mentioned, and concludes that he was a diviner of 
higher rank belonging to the bārū-guild.

The mahbū is one whom god has seared, made mad; the 
eccstatic, frenzied diviner, and thus different from the other 
types mentioned. One of the synonyms is ʾēgā, to become en-
graged (Haldar 23) which would be an interesting parallel to 
( ) meṣuqqā ʿ in Hos. 9:7.
Landsberger's definition of mahbū is "an ecstatic, gifted with 
vision" (quoted by Haldar 23). The mahbū would announce his 
oracles when in ecstasy. Other methods employed by him were 
the dream oracle and its subsequent interpretation, and omen 
interpretation. Haldar thinks that "neither the mahbū nor the 
bārū were restricted to any one definite form of divination."(28) 
The importance of this phenomenon is in its similarity to 
eccstatic prophecy among the NW Semites: Arameans, Canaanites, 
and Israelites. Oppenheim (Anc. Mes. 221-2), however, is 
careful in pointing out that ecstatic oracles and prophecies 
were alien to the Babylonians, and are found almost only in 
Assyria, Mari, and the Bible.
Other methods employed by him were the dream oracle and its subsequent interpretation, and omen interpretation. Malhar thinks that "neither the nahhu nor the baru were restricted to any one definite form of divination." (28)

All these types - the baru, sa'ilu, apilu, sabru and maffu - were diviners of different kinds. It is rather difficult to arrive anywhere at clear results as to the exact relations and division of functions among them, which probably fluctuated at different times and places. What is clear is the overlapping of some, if sometimes not all, of their functions. The various appellations then denote different aspects of their divinatory practices, as the 'seeing' of 'the secrets of the gods', the putting of questions to them, the obtaining of answers, also the state of ecstasy in which the answers were sometimes given. These various designations, however, prove the large extent of specialization, in this profession, similar to the various diviners etc. mentioned inDt 18:10-11 and Jer 27:9.

12. Types of Diviners Similar to the baru and maffu among the NW Semites (with the Exception of the Bible)

There is first the Zakir inscription which, in comparison to much of the Babylonian material, is rather late. Zakir of Hamat and noticed L is ruled about 800-780 BCE. The inscription was made in his time. Like the Mesa inscription, and royal inscriptions in general, it is written in the first person.

The lines important for our purpose are 11-13:

\[
\begin{align*}
\ldots & \text{ne} \, \text{bya} \, l \text{y}^1 \text{y}^1 \text{m} \text{a} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\ldots & \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \, \text{by} \\
\end{align*}
\]
The lacunae are to be filled in as follows:

ţyn is the Hebrew ḫozīm or ro'īm. The second term, 'rryn (Albright in Enc. Micr. III 196-200) or 'ddyn (Woopmans, Donner-Roelling and others) is difficult because of its uncertain reading and meaning. The best that can be said is that it probably denotes a type of diviner similar to the bārū and mahū, like ḫyn; if ḫyn is the 'seer', it may denote the type of diviner who is more the speaker, announcer.

The ḫyn played clearly a similar role to the bārū—priests, in providing the answer to the prayer of Zakir. The answer could have been given by different means, perhaps by a visionary, as e.g. a dream of the ḫyn. But as the other term for what may be diviners as well is not clear, and no specific divinatory medium or technique is mentioned, no definite conclusions are possible.

In the Mesa inscription, about 840 BCE, the only line of interest here is 14 (similarly 32): ḫn wā nēp ḫn ḫty wēm 'ām (nī). Nothing is said here of the medium of transmission.

The nearest parallels to a king being in a difficult situation, his prayer, and the encouraging answer of his god, like Zakir, are found in the oracles concerning the Assyrian King Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE; NET 449-50) who must have been in great distress and therefore prayed to his gods; and in the Bible of Mesekeia, King of Zuda, as related in 2K19 (Is 37, also 2 Chr 32). A detailed treatment of these parallels
cannot be made here. But it is clear that there is a very similar pattern in the answers of the gods through their respective baru/hzy/nabī.

From the Ugaritic texts, nothing for our theme can be learned. There is only the incubation and subsequent divine revelation in a dream to King Dn'ī, the future father of Aqht. The only intermediary between 'El and Dn'ī is Baal (Thespos/2, 332-3, note) but no human intermediary is mentioned. The role of the seer or prophet is unknown at Ugarit in the present state of our knowledge. However, it is certain that there were such functionaries. A witness on a legal tablet was designated "the seer and priest of Adad". Another person was called the seer. But these texts were written in Akkadian with Sumerian "abbreviations" for such titles. There is no evidence to show what Ugaritic term, if any, had the connotation of "seer". Its discovery will doubtlessly add an important chapter to the study of ancient Semite religion.

The question whether any inferences can be drawn from the absence of diviners and divination in these texts can be left open.

13. The Role of the Diviner
The institution of the diviner was a very ancient one in
Babylonia. His status within his community must have been very important because of his function as decision-maker in the name of the gods. As divination occupied such a prominent position within Babylonian religion, its functionaries, organized in a kind of professional guild keeping their secret teachings but to themselves, must at times have exerted immense influence. As certain forms of divination were performed only for kings, even they must have been dependent on their divination, so that it is hard to overestimate their possible influence. No doubt they sometimes used – or misused – their position for their own purposes, of which official texts will naturally not tell. As it is evident from later sources about Chaldean Magicians after the fall of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, their reputation was anything but honest.

Another observation of importance is the difference between Babylonian and Assyrian divination; the latter, contrary to the former, was sometimes ecstatic, especially in later times. Last, the striking similarity between Assyrian, Aramean, and Israelite divination/prophecy, although late, is certainly remarkable. As Balaam was an Aramean (or at least came from Aram), this factor, as will be shown later, played an important part in his religions "background".

The baru had set-up an institution within which there were baru-priest of several grades and of various function, which appears to have developed into a hierarchy of such functionaries. The instruction of the baru, and doubtlessly of the others as well, was carried out in special schools. The secrecy of their teachings was always stressed, and outsiders
and uninitiated were not permitted to be taught, in fact refused access to their teachings altogether. Moreover, the bārū-profession had become hereditary, and not even a son of a bārū was always admitted. Their secret teaching made the direct approach of the common man to the great main gods in most cases almost impossible; so did their theology. The services of the bārū were indispensable because it was only he who knew how to approach the gods. As their extant rituals and prayers clearly show, the great gods could often not be approached directly but only by the intercession of some minor gods whose help had therefore to be attained first. By and large, once the various clues are taken together they fit surprisingly well into what might be called a very institutionalized cult whose distinctive marks were a rather crude polytheism heavily saturated with magical elements, and a hierarchy of the few initiated to the exclusion of the common man.

The bārū by virtue of his institutionalism was likely to overemphasize the role of the official, making it difficult for the individual to find a direct, personal access to his gods. Religion became somehow lost to him in a secret-mongering performed by professionals which he was at a loss to understand. Such a development tended to condemn to death spontaneous religious feeling because it made a religiously creative approach within the established institution, encumbered by an excess of tradition, almost impossible. This is the ultimate fate of any religion becoming institutionalized, and this is what finally happened to Babylonian and Assyrian religion.
Notes to: Chapter 1

   "an original product of the intellectual effort of the
   Semitic Akkadians. (210)

2. Preface Meissner, to 2nd vol., p. I
   B. Meissner, Baby-lonia and Assyria, 2nd vol., Heidelberg 1925,
   Preface, p. I

3. Meissner 293; 397-3

4. Meissner 278-9

5. Meissner 245, 268; Oppenheim IDB 287

6. Meissner 243

7. Oppenheim IDB 287; James 233-4
   E. O. James, the ancient gods, New York 1960, 233-4

8. Albright, FSAC 210-II; "Oppenheim, Dreams, 224b, for
   Alalakh; IDB article Divination, I 357-8
   (in text)

9. (in text)

10. Meissner 267, 268; James 233

11. Meissner 243

12. Jastrow, Die Religion Babyloniens und Assyriens, 2nd
    part, 700-5

12a. This paragraph and the next closely
    follow Oppenheim (IDB vol 1, 284-5)
    whose treatment of this difficult
    subject is very lucid and penetrating.

13. Oppenheim IDB 284
14. Meissner 278-9

15. Meissner 325-7, 240-1

16. Oppenheim 286; omiha ablābra a. impetrativa

17. As to the meanings of the formations and deviations, see Meissner 269-275 (very detailed); James 233

18. Examples are given in ch. 4, part 2, para 1.

19. We follow here closely Oppenheim IDBI 286

20. Xenophanes. Cf.: 


22. EEI (EE= Enuma Elis) 59-64

23. KE IV 91

24. EE IV 61-62

25. EE IV 19-28, Heidel 37n73

26. Meissner 125
Notes to: Chapter 1 (cont'd)

37. v. Meissner 53-4, Haldar 1-2 explains it as a reference to initiation rites.
37a. ibid.
38. Meissner 139-40

39. See ch. 4, pt 2, para. 1
39a. This is the expression mostly preferred by the moderns, as the tabernacle was attached to a sanctuary.
40. Meissner 140

41. Meissner 54
42. Meissner 269-70

43. Meissner 55
44. Meissner 53

45. Cf. 1 Sam 28:6

46. A case of even bruṭiū-priestesses is then mentioned.

47. As to the etymology of šabru, see Meissner 66 n. 2 and Haldar 17 n. 1. This word also appears in Ju 7:15

(1) as a hapax legomenon; see Gesenius-Buhl HAT, art. Sāber. The 'breaking' of a difficult dream, like the 'breaking' of a code, might have been a nice popular etymology. If, however, the word already
Notes to: Chapter 1 (cont'd)

47. (cont'd) existed in Sumerian, it cannot have been a "saf'el of br' (from which buru) 'to see'. Oppenheim (Dreams, etc.) does not mention the sabru at all.

48. Haldar 28 n. 1

49. Cf. Haldar 34

50. wydr, Koopman, Donner-Roellig, is to be preferred to wy'mr (Enc. Mi'qr, vol. 3, art. Hamat). Cf. 2 K 21:10 (5-6) in the text

51. Dalet and 'ayin are virtually of identical form in the inscription, see reproduction in Enc. Miqr. ibid.

52. Both the Arabic Ꞛ‘adda and the Hebrew ḫ pérd are of doubtful value for preferring the reading with dalet.

53. 52. Thepis 332-3, note


56. Meissner first 207
Chapter I: The Role of the Diviner

Chapter I: Part III

Divination in Ancient Israel

1. The Dichotomy of Religious Belief and Practice in Ancient Israel
2. The Mesopotamian Background of Israelite Folk-Religion
3. Canaanite Influence on Israel in Egypt
4. Divinatory and Magical Practices of the Canaanites ( Dt 18:10-11)
5. The Problem of a "Canaanite" Substratum of Folk-Religion in Israel
6. Qesem as a Legitimate Babylonian Practice ( Ez 21:26-28)
7. Terms Used to Describe Balaam's Performances
8. The Roots  qedem and nḥš: their Meaning and Distribution
Divination and Magic in Ancient Israel

1. The Dichotomy of Religious Belief and Practice in Ancient Israel

Both divination and magic cannot be dealt with in isolation but must be viewed in the broader context of folk-religion; as they can develop only within a certain milieu of religion and culture. Therefore, both of them will be discussed in this sub-chapter against the wider background of folk religion.

It has long been recognized that the exalted religious ideas and ideals as preached by Biblical prophets must not be equated with the actual religious beliefs and practices of the Israelite people at their times. It was not only that the ideal demands could not easily be translated into daily life; even when they were accepted by the majority of the people at certain times, the factor of a parallel (underground) undercurrent of religious element of a more primitive character existing largely within the lower layers of the people has to be taken into account. That such an element might also be found within the lower layers of religious consciousness of people of higher rank, is exemplified by Saul (1 Sam 28), when acting under extreme constraint.

This coexistence of essentially different elements of religion is of course nothing new, and can be found in almost every form of 'higher' religion. It has been proved beyond doubt for many religious communities. Medieval and even modern Europe are typical examples for the existence of 'official' Christianity side by side with very ancient pre-Christian beliefs.
and practices of a much more primitive character. An almost limitless number of such examples can be adduced from those various European countries and provinces, particularly small localities, where people were able to maintain their religious and cultural autonomy.

The same dichotomy has been shown to have existed in post-Biblical Judaism, during the Talmudic (Tannaitic as well as Amoraic) period, in the Jewish history of the Middle Ages, but also in modern Judaism, especially where orthodoxy has been able to continue its hold on the masses, like in Hassidic communities.

Ancient Israel cannot have been different. The religion of Moses and later of the prophets was certainly not identical with that of the broad masses, of the simple people. This must have been especially true in the case of the Israelites who conquered Canaan: a people with essentials of a 'higher' religion invaded, conquered and subsequently became mixed with another people of a 'lower', more primitive form of religion. (The astonishing fact is that the Israelite religion was able to survive at all, and did not become just another form of Canaanite religion) In contrast to the ethical demands of prophetic religion, one thinks of course at once of various forms of superstition and magic, concerned mainly with necromancy, divination, fertility rites, etc.
The same can be assumed wherever Dt 31:16, Jos 24:14,23, Nu 17:5,18:14-20 and 1 Sam 7:3-4,15:23. They must have included objects which were used also for divination and magic for the Babylonian practice, also for divination and magic. Zec 10:2, Ez 21:26 constitute excellent proof. ("Elohim" is to be understood in its wider connotation of divine powers, like fertility, and as their representation by figurines.)

3. Canaanite influence on Israel in Egypt

As show by Jos 24:14, the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt left their mark also on their 'underground' current of religion, and Ez 20:7-8 may well be based on facts still known at that time. This was formerly thought to have been pure Egyptian religious influence. But it has become clear that the Israelites were exposed even in Egypt to Canaanite influence. The Semitic Hyksos Kings (1720-1550 BCE) introduced their own culture and religion, which certainly survived their later deposition by indigenous Egyptian rulers. Canaanite religion left its mark on Egyptian religion Canaanite religion left its mark on Egyptian rulers, and Canaanite influence during the 14th and 13th century BCE in Egypt can now clearly be proved. Entering Canaan, the Israelites came again under Canaanite influence, as amply evidence by the books of the so-called former and latter prophets.

The question how far Canaanite varieties of divination and magic were taken over from Babylonian, Egyptian, or Anatolian practices can be left open here. A predominant Babylonian influence is generally admitted.
4. **Divinatory and Magical Practices of the Canaanites**

They are conveniently listed together in Dt 18:10-11 (with the new JPS translation). (The translation is that of the new JPS)

1. who consigns his son or daughter to the fire

2. or who is an augur,

3. a soothsayer,

4. a diviner,

5. a sorcerer,

6. one who casts spells,

7. & 8. one who consults ghosts or familiar spirits

9. or one who inquires of the dead

It should be noted that these practices are in that chapter contrasted to prophecy as the inspired word of Y.

As the Bible contains only one more extensive description of one of these practices (Neh. 13:28), and little, if any, other comparative material is available, some of them are not quite clear. According to Driver, "(1) was "a kind of ordeal ... resorted to for the purpose of securing good fortune"(2); (2), (3), and (4) were various methods of divination, (5) and (6) were different forms of magic; (7), (8) and (9) necromantic practices, i.e. various modes of consulting the world of spirits (223)."

It is beyond the scope of this study to go into details of these practices and the specific beliefs underlying each of
them. Suffice it to say that in one way or another all of these nine Canaanite practices were concerned with obtaining a knowledge of the future, that is divination proper, or with influencing future events by exerting a magical influence upon them. In these practices, divination and magic were often closely intertwined. Their number is certainly indicative of the variety of these usages and of the extent to which they were practiced.

In Dt 18:9, leštilmad does not mean "you shall not learn", but "you shall not get accustomed to". The Israelites certainly possessed a knowledge of these practices mentioned, e.g., in Ex 22:17, Lev 19:26,31, and Dt 18:10-11 before conquering Canaan, because most ANE religions had them in one form or another. The patriarchs who had migrated from Mesopotamia and stayed for centuries in Canaan - just as the Israelites later in Egypt - had ample opportunity not only to become acquainted with these customs and their underlying beliefs, but also to be exposed to their influence. It is claimed that these laws and many more, as e.g. Ex 23:18-19 (sacrificial practices, including קְרֵי עֲנָה 'וֹדּוֹ שֶׂעֶשֶׂה), Lev 19:28 (mourning rites), Dt 24:1-4 (marriage of one's divorced wife after her having contracted a marriage to someone else), were not only given with the specific intention to counteract regular Canaanite practices which had already been encountered, but were also promulgated because the lawmaker was thinking in terms of the future conquest or, as later experienced in Canaan, reconstructed in such a way. But it is very improbable that such matters were then customary only in Canaan (as well as
in other ANE countries) and not somehow in Israel as well. Since, however, not a single case of divination and sorcery in Israel is reported before the time of the conquest, it is claimed that such practices did not exist in Israel before the conquest. This is very improbable. Even if the premise of this argumentum ex silentio is admitted, it does not yet follow that these elements could not have existed in a latent form. It is a well-known fact in the history of religions that with the seemingly complete victory of a 'higher' religion, lower religious forms do not disappear altogether but do continue their shadowy underground existence in the lower regions of religious consciousness of the masses, to reappear at the first suitable moment. Moreover, the raison d'être of many more laws particularly in Lev 18-19, but also in Dt, can only be explained when the latent existence of Canaanite religious patterns in Israel is assumed. It can even be shown that some essential features of what is commonly regarded early Israelite religion (before the conquest) can be properly understood only as an antithesis against the background of Canaanite religion.

What seems to us the only possible conclusion is that within the Israelite people, such a substratum of folk-religion with its concomitant beliefs and customs was definitely present similar to that of other Semitic peoples at that time, and especially of the NW Semites. The existence of such an element of
folk-religion in Israel, almost fully identical with Canaanite religious patterns, would likewise explain the apparent ease and speed with which Canaanite practices were assimilated by the Israelites once they had settled in Canaan.

We therefore arrive at the result of a definite similarity of character, sometimes of outright even identity, of essential basic features of 'official' Canaanite religion and Israelite folk-religion. Viewed in this light, it can be shown that the Balaam Pericope must have had a very important meaning, not only for the conflict between Canaanite and official Israelite religion, but also for the conflict within Israelite religion between its official form and its unofficial, underground elements of 'Canaanite' folk-religion.

6. "Qesem" as a Legitimate Babylonian Practice

An interesting illustration of qesem is found in Ez 21:26-28. Nebuchadnezzar, on his military campaign in Egypt, had to decide which way to lead his army. He could proceed either through Judah and Jerusalem, or through Ammon and Rabbath Bery Ammon. He then took resort to divination, the customary Babylonian practice. In v. 26, three kinds of divination are mentioned: by arrows, by putting the question before tena-\(\text{?}\)phim, and by hepatoscopy. They reason the Babylonian king made use of three different means was most probably to arrive at a sure decision as to the will of his gods. In the prophet's view, Y. caused him - this seems to be the inference of the somewhat difficult verses 28-30 - to campaign against Jerusalem and Judá, because of the enormous transgressions of its inhabitants against him (against Y.).
As often in the Bible, divination and magic practiced by non-Israelites is used by YHWH for his own purposes, just as the conquests of Israel and Judah by foreign kings (cf. Jer 25:27-28). Nebuchadnezzar of course thought that he had obtained the evidence of his Babylonian gods; the prophet was sure that YHWH had directed the decision in order to execute his own plan so as to punish the Judahites, his people.

7. **Terms Used to Describe Balaam's Performances**

a/ In the Balaam Prophecy, of all the aforementioned terms only nāhās is used to describe Balaam's mantic performances (24:1) to obtain a divination by YHWH, alluding clearly to 23:3, 15. In Jos 13:22, Balaam is called hāqāseh; nothing definite can be learned from Nu 22:7. In 23:23, nāhās is equated with qāsem. As pointed out by Driver (op. cit. 223) qāsem is commonly used to express the idea of divining in general. Since Balaam "of Aram Naharayim" (Dt 23:5) acted very much like a Babylonian bārū, which will be shown later, it is possible that the meanings of both nāhās and qāsem are influenced in the Balaam Prophecy by the language of Aram Naharayim of that time as well as by similar Babylonian concepts of divination and magic. This is the most that can be said here, since no other detailed descriptions are extant in the Bible, as already pointed out.

b/ The ancient translations render nāhās and qāsem in the following way in Nu 23:23 (and in most of their other occurrences):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>nāhās</th>
<th>qāsem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vulgate</td>
<td>ΝΗΧ</td>
<td>κενή</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LXX</td>
<td>κενή</td>
<td>κενή</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syriac</td>
<td>κενή</td>
<td>κενή</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>divination</td>
<td>divination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...
Both divination and augurium mean divination in general, without specific reference to omens from flight of birds.

8. The Roots qsm and nhs: Their Meaning and Distribution

(1) qsm

pop qsm in Hebrew, Jewish Aramaic

pop qsm (qasam) in Aramaic means: 1. to cut, to chip, from which qisma', a piece of wood; 2. to divine, from which qasam, qisma' and qisma' (= Hebrew qesem) stand for nomen actionis; qassama', qasama' and qosama' (= Hebrew qosem) for nomen agentis.

Reference: Levy, Jastrow

p3p qsm in Syriac, by change of s into ș before q, qasam: vaticinatus est (=it has been prophesied), qasama' = wortilegium (divination by lots), divinatio, vaticinium

Reference: Brockelmann

p3p/pop qsm/qasam in Christian Palestinian Aramaic

ReChm(ą) m in Mandaeic

qasam (qasama) in Arabic means: to divide, distribute; istaqsama ( ), the tenth conjugation, means: to ask for an oracle. qismat(un) ( ) is the (by Allah determined) fate.

Ref: Wehr

p3p mqasm in Sabaic is an oracle by lots.

Reference: Gesenius

p pop qsm in Ethiopic

Reference: Gesenius

p t ksm in Ugaritic: 2 Aq I 32 II 4, 21: ksm || mth = portion.

Reference: Gordon

p3p ksm in Akkadian: kasamu(m) to cut, zerschneiden.

Reference: Von Soden

Also in Hebrew ksm, only once in Ez 44:20: abscheren, to cut off hair.
The original meaning of qsm can be best recognized in Akkadian and especially in Aramaic, perhaps also in Arabic, where it still preserved its original sense of cutting, chipping, etc. wood into pieces. The noun form for chips of wood, without relation to divination, is still extant there. Therefore the meaning of divining by cutting wood into pieces for performing an oracle must be secondary. It may then be assumed that qsm spread from Aramaic to Hebrew, Syriac, Mandaic, Arabic, Sabaic, Ethiopic, because only the secondary meaning is preserved in these languages. The meaning of "prophecy", found in Syriac only, must be late and cannot be original.

In the Bible, it is then used for divination typical of non-Israelites: of the Canaanites in Dt 18:10, of Balaam (apart from Nu 22-24) in Jos 13:22, of the Philistines Ez 6:2, of Babylonian mantice (barue) Jes 44:25; then in a derogatory sense of the so-called "false" prophets: Jes 3:2, Mi 3:6-7, Jer 27:9, 29:8, Ez 13,21, Ze 10:2 and some more, of the Ba'alat Ob in 12:28:8.

In Bible poetry, qsm appears often parallel to hzh, but always after it, therefore being the more uncommon word, in those aforementioned passages which are poetical.

The conclusion is that qsm had undergone the semantic shift from its original meaning "to cut" etc., performing an oracle by lots, when it was taken over into Hebrew, where it already denotes foreign divinatory practices, a non-Israelite visionary type of diviner, and qeesm similar to Balaam. This would account for the shift to "to see", as clearly found in Mi 3:6 and elsewhere. The original meaning reappears then in Ez 21:27 only, of the divining of a Babylonian king.
Mush less can be said about this root, which is found only in Hebrew, Aramaic and Syraic, and in Arabic. The question whether nhs is related with הָעָהָש הָעָהָש, snake can be left open here, but it is probably related to חָש, to murmur, whisper, which is used about the peculiar hissing sound of snakes before attacking: Jer 3:17.34

In Hebrew, nhs means to divine, to observe omens, to take or observe as an omen, to act according to it.

Gen 30:27 is probably derived from Akk. nhs to have in abundance and therefore cannot be considered here. nahš. yenaḥš in Gen 44:5,15 may denote divination by means of a cup, but can equally mean the obtaining of normally inaccessible knowledge by divination in general. In Lev 19:26, Dt 18:10, 2K 17:17,21:6 nhs is mentioned together with גֶּפֶן and/or נְפֵן (the last is not understood clearly, either) indicating that it was (a form of) divination.

The only poetical parallel is Nu 23:23 where nḥs comes before גֶּפֶן, indicating that it may have been the more common word. But this verse obviously states that both nahš and גֶּפֶן were foreign, non-Israelite practices, perhaps alluding to their Aramean—Syrian provenance.

Because of its rarity and because of lack of descriptive details, no definite conclusions can be drawn as to its exact meaning.

In Aramaic and Syriac, nḥs has the same meaning as in Hebrew, to divine, etc., as above.

In Arabic, nḥs has the meaning of misfortune, calamity, disaster, being unlucky, portentous.

No additional insight can be gained from these languages for the semantic range of Hebrew nḥs.
Notes to: Chapter 1


3. Which, however, have been in a state of rapid disintegration and disappearance (especially after the first World War), caused equally by anti-religious and ideologies and propaganda in some countries, and by universal modern education in others.


5. Albright, FSAO 238

6. Cf. Ch. 1 part 3 #1

7. Jacob, by bringing his family from Aram Naharayim (Gen 24:10), doubtless brought with him more people influenced in a very similar way.

Notes to: Chapter 1 (cont'd)


10. The woman at 'Eyn Dor made use of an oph which was in her possession to conjure up the spirit of the by then dead prophet Samuel to have him answer a question put to him incognito by King Saul, concerning the outcome of an imminent battle. This was clearly an act of obtaining a prediction through consulting a spirit conjured up from the netherworld where the spirits of the dead, who were believed to possess a knowledge of the future, were supposed to continue their shadowy existence. Cf., e.g., 15:19-21; 17:13-16; also: IDB, vol. 863.

11. S. R. Driver, Deuteronomy (2nd ed. 1902), 222-6

12. Cf. Divination IDB vol I, 857. For qsm an nhs, see at the end of this part.


15. If the Biblical account is trustworthy, Abraham must have been familiar with elements of Sumerian and old Babylonian culture in Ur, and later in Haran with Hurrian and proto- (?) Aramaic culture; Jacob with the latter, in addition
Notes to: Chapter 1 (cont'd)

15. (cont'd) to Canaanite culture; all these apart from the culture of the Amurru ('Emor), especially as known from Mari. For the background of the patriarch, see Albright, FSAC, 237-9.

16. Depending on the stand taken as to the time of composition of Dt.

17. There is little doubt that these customs were actually practised by the Canaanites. Extrabiblical early as well as late sources (The Ugaritic texts, especially the Baal Epos; Greek and Roman writers, especially Lucian's De Dea Syria) point to the same direction. E.g., W. F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, Baltimore, 1953, 92-94; ibid., The Role of the Canaanites in the History of Civilization, in: The Bible and the ANE, 338.

18. For which then Nu 23:23 is adduced. - Cf. e.g. Kaufmann, Toldot etc., 1st vol., 484-5, 492-3, 5-6. K.'s position is more extreme. He asserts that naḥas and qesem did (almost) not exist in Israel, likewise that con-Israelite divination and magic, even idol-worship, were not really understood by the writers of the Bible. This view of K. seems to us very improbably, to say the least, a latent form. It is a well-known fact in the history of religions that with the seemingly complete victory of a 'higher' religion, lower religious forms do not disappear altogether but do continue their shadowy...
Notes to: Chapter 1 (cont'd)

19. Many of the so-called Canaanite customs are known to have been common Semitic, or even common to the ANE. It was only that these usages were pronounced in Canaan, and that the Biblical laws were concerned with the impending conquest and necessary clash of religions and cultures.

20. This argument, if right, would make it possible to relate many of the Deut. laws, especially those intended to prevent "Canaanite" practices, to an earlier date than so far has been thought possible.

21. That this was actually the case has been amply and convincingly shown by T. L. Gaster in several articles in the *IDB*. Cf. *Angles, Azazel, Dead (Abode of the), Demons, Myth in the Bible*; also in his commentaries to Ugaritic (Canaanite) and Hittite myths and poems in his *Thespis*, 1921. To deny the existence of such a substratum was possible during the 19th century, when "rational religion" and "pure, ethical monotheism" were deemed possible.

22. As an example might serve the Baal Peor incident after the conquest of Eastern Transjordan. Similarly the episode of the Golden Calf can be explained very well on the assumption that a substratum of folk-religion existed in Israel. Canaanite and ANE parallels to that episode are well known, not only from later books of the Bible (e.g. 1 and 2, Kings, Hosea and Amos). How far Canaanite elements were later incorporated into Israelite religion is a still much debated question.
Notes to: Chapter 1 (cont'd)

23. This of course does not exclude the possibility that after the conquest some typical practices of the Canaanites then living in the country of Canaan, formerly unknown in Israel, were subsequently taken over by them. This may have been the case particularly with the introduction of (semi-) foreign cults, as e.g. the worship of the Sidonite Baal (1 K 16:31).

24. This has been entirely overlooked by Kaufmann as well as almost all other commentators. For a detailed discussion of the deeper implication of the Balaam prophecy see ch. 6 and especially 9.

25. In v. 26, ligsom qesem is used for divination in general, but in v. 27 haqqesem Yeruš alaym only the lot or arrow is meant on which the name of Jerusalem was inscribed. In his left hand he probably held the other one, on which evidently the name of (Rabbat Bney) Ammon was inscribed. In spite of Meissner's doubts (p. 275) it can be assumed that the description is genuine. For a similar practice among the pre-Islamic Arabs see J. Wellhausen, Rest arabischen Heidentums, 126-8, 167.

26. Similarly Ex 7:11-12, 8:3, 1 Sam 6:7-12; perhaps also 1 Sam 28, esp. verse 6. Against Kaufmann, Toldot etc., vol I, p. 461-5.
Notes to: Chapter 1 (cont'd)

27. See the various commentaries also ch. 9

28. See above to Ez 21:26

29. Jacob Levy, Chaldaecisches Woerterbuch, Leipzig, 1867;
   Jacob Levy, Woerterbuch uber die Talmudim n. Midraschim,
   Leipzig, 1889; M. Jastrow, A Dictionairy of the Targumim... 1926

30. Brockelmann, Lexicon Syriacum, Halle, 1928

31. E.S. Drower and R. Macuch, Mandaic Dictionary, Clarendon

32. Which is the modern "Kismet", mostly used in a fatalistic
    sense.

32. H. Wehr, Arabisches Woerterbuch ..., Wiesbaden 1957.

33. Gesenius - Buhl, Handwoerterbuch uber das Alte Testament
    1915

34. O.H. Gordon, Ugaritic Manual, Analecta Orientalia 35, Roma
    1955

35. W. Von Soden, Akkadisches Handworterbuch, Wiesbaden,
    1959; (O. Harrassowitz)

35a. The magical meaning is still clearly preserved in halləhəs
   ‘al hammakkāh in Sanhedrin 10:1; for more examples see Jastrow
   under lhē.

35a: In spite of the irony, however, this is probably no more than a
play on words. The point

   that is the healing, not divination or magic. Later, however, it came to be worshipped

   because of its assumed magical healing power and was therefore destroyed: 2K 18:7.
   Cf. also in Phœnix 79.
Notes to: Chapter 1 (cont'd)

37. So already Gesenius to nhs I

38. Which would of course heighten the effect of the servants and later Joseph's words: in spite of the theft of the cup used for lecomancy, Joseph by his divination was still able to trace the thieves.

39. As to Nu 24, see ch. 4

40. Ref.: Jastrow; Brockelmann (n. 29, 30)
Second Chapter: The Role of the Prophet

1. The Quasi-Prophetic Texts Discovered at Mari
2. The So-Called Akkadian Prophecies
3. The Functions of the Prophet in the Israelite Community
4. The Address to History
5. Prophecy and Precognition
6. The Teachings of Israelite Prophecy
7. The Prophet as a Messenger of Y.
8. The Prophet's Dependence on Y. his God
9. The Prophetic Dialogue
10. The Analysis of the Prophetic Experience
The Quasi-Prophetic Texts Discovered at Mari

1. Of special importance for our subject is the discovery of these texts which are to be dated at the end of the 18th century B.C.E. They are remarkable for three distinctive features:

1/ Spontaneous prophecy - A muhhum speaks in the name of his god (Dagan) to the king (Zimrilm of Mari) without having been asked to do so.

2/ Prophecy as a divine communication (Sendungsprophetic)
   a) "A muhhum said... the god (Dagan) has sent me (with the following message): quickly send to the king (to carry out a certain demand)." (Noth, 236)
   b) "The god sent me (with the following message): send to your lord (the content of the message follows)." (Noth 237)
   c) In a dream vision (not of a muhhum): "Now go, I send you to Zimrilim; thus you yourself shall speak to him." (Noth, 236)

3/ The limited contents of the prophetic message

The demands of the message are these:
   a/ to take care of the god's sustenance, of his priests and sanctuary;
   b/ to institute temple messengers to keep the king informed of possible oracles.

The meaning of the last demand apparently was to secure continuous influence of the priests and muhhu-men on matters of current policy of the king, and also to obtain current information of the plans of royal policy. (Noth, 240)

2. To these, the following biblical passages should be compared in which prophets speak to kings or leaders of the people.
a/ Ex 5:1,3: Moses and Aaron demand in the name of Y., the god of Israel, that Pharaoh shall set free the Israelites. This demand is repeated several times later before the exodus.

b/ 1 Sam 15:1-3: Samuel tells Saul in the name of Y. to destroy the Amalekites.

c/ 2 Kings 20:4: Isaiah speaks to Hezekiah in the name of Y. promising to heal him from his sickness.

Many more such instances can of course be quoted from the Bible. To give just a few: Ex 32:26-27; Jn 2:1-3; 1 Sam 2:27-36; 1 Kings 11:29-39; Jer 17:1-15; Ez 20.

3. A comparison of these Mari texts with biblical prophetic texts leads to the following results:

1/ The Mari Muhhum-men (prophets) speak spontaneously in the name of Dagan their god, very much as a biblical prophet would speak in the name of Y. his god.

2/ No mantic means are mentioned with these Mari-prophets. They announce their god's word because of their inner conviction, unlike ANE priests and diviners.

3/ The demands of the Mari-prophets are limited to cultic matters.

4/ Their style is sometimes very similar to that of biblical prophets.

5/ There is no ethical content in their demands, contrary to those of the biblical prophets.

6/ Nor is there a sense of history in the messages of the Mari-prophets whose demands are of immediate, limited character.

7/ Finally, in the messages of the Mari-prophets, the concept of Dagan is essentially not different from that of any other ANE god.
4. Of the different evaluations, Noth (whom we follow here) seems to have arrived at the most balanced results. In his opinion, these 'divine messengers' of the Mari texts are doubtlessly so far the nearest ANE parallel to biblical prophecy so that some connection between them must be assumed. (Noth, 235)

In the biblical prophet, the type of the 'divine messenger' reappears, but he is not an exact parallel to him because of the limited content of his message; he nevertheless belongs to the pre-history of biblical prophecy. Noth does not minimize the importance of the parallels, pointing out that 'prophecy as a divine communication' ("Sendungsporphetic") is essential for the understanding of Israelite life and religion, and not just an ephemeral or secondary cultural parallel. (Noth, 235)

Even if the great difference between the ethical demands and interpretation of specific events in terms of a divinely ordained pattern of the biblical prophets and the rather limited cultic and perhaps political demands of the Mari prophets is accounted for (Noth, 240), the basic parallels are too important to be disregarded altogether. Because of the paucity of the presently available texts it cannot even be argued that these 'prophecies' were limited to cultic and political matters only.

5. The almost inevitable conclusion is that biblical prophecy appears somehow related to earlier Mesopotamian sources, and that its origins must be somehow connected with them. (Noth, 242, 246)

It may be tentatively suggested that Israelite prophecy took over some of its features, like spontaneity, wording and style, and the idea of the 'Sendungsporphetic'. But it is radically
transformed its content by introducing its distinctive elements, particularly its unconditional ethical divine commands. Moses and Aaron, described as prophetic personalities in the Pentateuch, may very well have been receivers of such traditions, and in turn transmitters of definite prophetic patterns to subsequent generations. Some of the most obvious parallels to the quasi-prophetic texts are found in their words to Pharaoh (Ex 5:1-3) and later still in the words of Nathan (2 Sam 7:4ff, 12:7ff) and Gad (2 Sam 24:18ff) to King David, and from then on in an almost unbroken tradition to the classic prophetic.

6. These Mari-texts, in spite of their limited impact on biblical prophecy, have also changed the whole problem of its origins. The older view that Canaanite ecstatic prophecy generated a similar movement in Israel, has now to be given up. What remains is that it doubtlessly affected it, which is altogether not surprising because of the many more instances of Canaanite cultural and religious influence at that period, as particularly attested in the Book of Samuel. But later ecstatic manifestations of Israelite prophets were unfavorably regarded. None after the prophets after Samuel is said to have had ecstatic experiences comparable to those related in 1 Sam 19.

It must then be assumed that because of the pre-history of Israelite prophecy in these Mari texts, its beginnings must be dated much earlier than the 10th century B.C.E. Thus the question of prophecy and prophets during the second millennium B.C.E. has achieved a new dimension and cannot be explained any more solely by methods of oral tradition, retrojection and reinterpretation of earlier texts.
Finally it is not impossible that a non-Israelite prophet like Balaam could have received prophetic traditions from outside Israel.
Notes to: The Mari Texts

1. For the literature about these texts, see the following:
   G.F. Mendenhall, Mari, BA XI (1948) 2-19
   F.M. Boehl, in: Opera Minora, Groningen 1953, 63ff
   A Malamat, in: Eretz-Israel IV 74-84; V 67-73
   idem. in: Segal Festshrift
   idem. in: Encyclopedia Migrat (Hebr.) vol IV, Jerusalem, 1962, 559-79, esp. 577-8
   W. von Soden in W(elt des) O (Orients) 1950, 397-403
   Schmoekel, in ThLZ 76 (1951) 53ff.

   Of the various treatment of these texts, we find ourselves in agreement mostly with that of Noth. For a general background on Mari, the article of Malamat in the Enc. Migr. is very instructive.

2. Somewhat inexactlty, 'prophecy' and 'prophetic' are throughout this sub-chapter used for the quasi-prophetic phenomena of Mari.

3. Cf. also Noth 238-9

4. Apart from the similarities in prophecy, many more parallels in names, language and institutions have been pointed out which make the conclusions arrived at more probable; perhaps even ethnic relations.

5. As not all the Mari tablets have been published the question is best left open.

The So-called Akkadian Prophecies

The so-called Akkadian Prophecies contain a small number of texts whose provenance is late but which could have existed much earlier. One of them contains anonymous predictions about a ruler during whose reign, order, wealth, and happiness will prevail, to be followed by another ruler during whose time many calamities will befall the country. This sequence of rulers and periods is then repeated: a prosperous and happy to be followed by a calamitous one, etc. It is not known whether this description related to certain historical conditions or really a kind of 'prophecy', or whether such compositions appeared after the events described in them had already taken place. Oppenheim thinks that these texts did not belong to the main stream of literary tradition. The Book of Daniel betrays many similarities to this literary genre: in 1:23-25 and 11:3-45, certain but unnamed kings will ascend the throne. Then their reigns are described in such vague terms that only a person fairly well acquainted with the history of those times could possibly identify the events which the writer had in his mind.

The problem is whether this literary genre is older than the texts at present known; if so, it could have influenced the style of earlier Israelite prophecies.

As to the Balaam Narrative, the fourth oracle - actually a group of oracles - is composed in similarly general terms: a later king of Israel, unnamed, will bring destruction to Moab and Edom; Amalek will also be destroyed, probably by the same king. The Kainites will be led away captives by
Ashur, but Ashur and Ever are to be vanquished in turn by the Kittim. It is not even clear whether all these events are going to take place at about the same time. But the dissimilarities should also be noted: contrary to the Akkadian Prophecies, only one victorious king appears, but no number of years is mentioned; and the second part of the oracle is that even the victorious ones will be finally defeated.

This is all that can at present be said with certainty about these so-called Akkadian Prophecies in relation to Biblical prophetic style.
Notes to: Akkadian Prophecies

1. See JCS 18 (1964) 7ff, where additional literature is found.

2. The text pointed in ANET 450a belongs to the library of Ashurbanipal and has been dated at 648 B.C.E.

3. Meissner 282 Babylonian and Assyrian Law and Heidelberg 1925, 282

4. ANET ibid.; Meissner ibid

5. The reasons of such compositions may have been various: to ascribe the ability of foreknowledge to someone, for political reasons, as an attempt to understand history as an ever self-repeated process ("the way it was, it is always going to be") or similarly.

6. A.L. Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia, 22

7. J.C.S. ibid. 10z

8. The names of the enemies to cause destruction of Akkad are mentioned, see ANET ibid. For the historical background see ch. 9

9a. It is not clear which Ashur is meant; cf. Gen 25:3. However, in Gen 10 Ever is mentioned as a younger relative of Ashur.
Notes to: Akkadian Prophecies (cont’d)


11. Cf. Jer 25:12,14. The reason given is stated in v. 23b which is difficult and has therefore been explained in various ways. Cf. the various commentaries and translations.
The Functions of the Prophet in the Israelite Community

1. The Announcement of the Word of Y. to the King

The task of a prophet was to transmit the word of his god to those to whom he was sent. This could be practically almost everybody in Israel or even a foreigner, but because of the important role of the king in the ANE community, the word was often concerned with him. Therefore a king’s illness was not only his private affair, but at the same time, of major importance to his people. Thus, the healing of Hezekiah’s sickness and the promise of additional years of life are brought in connection with the miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians (2 K 20:1-6). Similarly, the sickness of Jerobeam’s son and his imminent death were to foreshadow the extinction of Jerobeam’s dynasty (1 K 14).

2. The Israelite prophet as the announcer of the Will of Y.

In Israel, the prophet would often announce the word of Y., his god, the word being the impending punishment to the king, later mostly to the people, because of their offences. This shows clearly that the Israelite prophet was regarded as an announcer of Y.’s intentions before they would materialize.¹

¹(Notes: For the importance and meaning of this difference, see ch. 4-6 of this chapter. The number of examples here is very numerous, suffice it to adduce here only a few: Ju 2, 1 S 15, 2 S 12, 1 K 11, 1 K 17, 2 K 20, Jer. 1, 25, 26) The number of cases in which the prophet announces Y.’s intentions – mostly punishments – before they happen exceeds
by far the number of instances where the prophet's opinion and advice are asked after a calamity had already begun. (note: cf. 2 S 21)

3. The advice of a prophet sought before a war

In matters of national policy, Y.'s advice was often sought, although not always followed. Everything related to war was of course of utmost national importance. Therefore a prophet's advice was asked before a war or major battle so as to learn whether Y. would grant victory or not. This practice was widespread as can be seen from the large number of cases related in the Bible. As will be shown, this was likewise the accepted practice of other ANE peoples.

Even when all the fundamental differences between Israelite prophecy and ANE divination etc. are accounted for, it is quite obvious that the Israelite prophet fulfilled to a large extent the same functions in his community as the various Mesopotamian diviners, magicians and exorcists in their own.
Chapter 2 Part 4

The Address to History

1. Prophecy was not concerned with history as such, as the modern scientific mind understands it. Nevertheless, prophecy did give a definite interpretation of history, which is, as might only be expected, radically different from suppositions of scientific historical writing. For the prophet, current events meant the unfolding of continuously working plan, or purpose, identified as Y.'s will; this plan being determined by a moral purpose. Its immediate execution at any one conditioned or other moment would be by the two complementary factors of human behaviour and Y.'s reaction it; its final aim might thus be delayed or quickened, but would always be attained because Y. Willed it thus from the beginning.

Thus the prophets understood history as one of the self-expressions fo Y. As they see it, there exists an identity between the will of Y. and the historical process. Sometimes this identity is articulated explicitly; more often it is implied, but still clearly recognizable. It may even be said that wherever this concept is totally absent, there is not true prophecy.

2. Accordingly, events do not exist in the mind of the prophets, isolated or meaningless. Therefore they always sum up history up to their time: history is, in a way, destiny. The event which happened was bound to happen that way, and could not have happened in a different way. Here, Y. may be defined as the fore-ordaining power, and his will as the dynamic of history. But this power of Y. does not always manifest itself in such a way that his plan is carried out on the spot.
The reason is that the events of history are not less determined by human behavior. The goal will be achieved even if the delay transcends the span of a man's life. This has often baffled even prophets who found it difficult to recognize Y.'s ultimate end within the context of the historical events of their own time.

Therefore the concept of prophetic history has to be widened so as to include even the future; the events of past, present and future are in their complex totality the plan conceived by Y. on the plane of human existence, to be carried out and achieved by humans, its execution dependent on them—but nevertheless always within the framework of the divine master-plan.

Once this plan has been laid before the people and explained to them, they are expected, even required, to act correspondingly so as to further the purpose of Y. Here the prophet is essentially not different from ordinary man: it is only that the demand made upon him puts him into a more responsible position, often of extreme historical importance. Biblical Israelite history is almost unthinkable without some of its central figures, such as Abraham, Moses, Samuel, Isai, Jeremia, and Second Isai, to name but a few.

3. To return to the required human response of prophetic admonition: in such a situation, the human reaction to a divine demand can be valued as positive or negative in moral-religious terms. The fulfillment of the prophetic demand will of course immediately further the divine plan; what is more difficult to recognize is that even a negative human response, the commitment of an immoral, anti-religious act, will not be able to undo the divine plan: it can change it, it can delay it, even for a
long time; but the divine aim will nonetheless be achieved, even by entirely different means and ways, often unpredictable, beyond the experience of a single human life, or generation. The price the people may have to pay for their non-acceptance of the divine purpose can be terrible: extermination of almost a whole generation of the people - as it actually happened several times in Biblical history.

At the final analysis of this theme one arrives at the philosophical question whether man can thwart Y's plan. The Israelites felt the existence of such a problem but were unable to deal it in terms of abstract thought.

Here the question of the scope of Y's purpose in history has to be brought up. In biblical history, the unfolding of Y's plan is at first limited to just one man. Subsequently it deals with his descendants, a family or clan who later become a people, but one people only. Later, settled in a country with other nations around it, the Israelite people becomes an integral part of its surroundings. The divine plan ultimately develops in such a way as to affect all the nations of the earth, the whole of mankind. Interestingly enough, the second and even the final stage are already existent in the first one: the universalistic ideal is clearly stated in the very first speech of Y, the Abraham.

An important step of Y's plan was reached when the Israelites were liberated from Egypt, and thus became a people, at least in their own consciousness. For future generations, their national history began with the exodus and the conquest and settlement in Canaan. This step is very accurately reflected in the four oracles of Balaam, whose main theme is the fact of
the nationhood of the Israelite people. Their exodus by Y., his special relationship to them, and their military strength alluding to their imminent conquest of Canaan are the major themes of the second and third oracle, and a victory over their present enemies and their allies in the father future is prophesied in the fourth oracle.
Notes to: Address to History

1. The Hebrew equivalents for plan are:
   1/ Is 5:19, 14:26, 19:17, 40:13; likewise Nu 24:14
   2/ Gen 50:20, Jer 11:19, 18:11, Is 55:8,11; 1/2: Mi 4:12
   3/ 1 Sam 27,3, Ex 18:29

2. The most famous example is perhaps Ex 6:2-8.

3. e.g. Dt 4:25-31; cf. also Gen 24:50


6. Cf. Habakuk's question and the answer given to him.


8. Cf. Ex 4:1-17,27-31, Jer. 1:5-10

9. Moses' transgression and his death, and completion of his task by Joshua.

10. The entry into the Land of Canaan by the second generation, 40 years later.

Notes to: Address to History (cont'd)

12. The next generation or a later one may face similar conditions and are expected to react in a more positive way, being influenced by the failure of their forefathers. Dt 1, Za 1:4-6

13. The first generation of the Exodus - Nu 14; the generation of Isaiah - Is 6; the generation which lived through the destruction of the First Commonwealth and in the diaspora - Ez 5, 20.


15. This is the purpose of the so-called "Heilsgeschichte" in the book of Genesis.

16. Historically, this took place at the time of King Solomon. However, the awareness of this situation was felt only at the beginning of the 8th century B.C.E. as e.g. in the prophecies of Amos. Cf. Am 1-2, 3:2, 6:1-2, 9:7-12.

17. The Messianic prophecies of Isaiah about Egypt and Assyria (Is 19:19-25) speak about these two nations in exactly those terms which are generally reserved to indicate the special status of Israel in its relation to Y.

18. Gen 12:1-3, to which 22:18 is to be compared; for the second stage, 15:7 and 17:6-8. For the same idea, see Is 51:1-6.
Notes to: Address to History (cont'd)

19. As to this, the reaction of the Moabites is the same as that of the Egyptians: cf. Nu 22:2-4 to Ex 1:9-13

20. Many later historical reviews therefore begin with these events: 1 Sam 12:6, Am 2:9-10, Jer 2:6-7, 32:20-21, Ez 20:5ff.
Chapter 2 Part 5

Prophecy and Precognition

1. The Semantic Change of "Prophet", "Prophecy" as Cause of the Change of the Concept of Prophecy

The word "prophet" is derived from the Greek announcer of oracles, and then diviner, seer; likewise "prophecy" from 
προφητεία, the gift of interpreting the will of the gods. These terms were used by the LXX when translating 1 Kings 19 and 
2 Kings 1, and likewise by the Vulgata ("propheta" and "prophetia"). They were however, misunderstood by later generations, and thus brought about an important change in the meaning of prophecy.

The original meaning of 
προφήτης was: the one who speaks for, instead of, someone else, and, more specifically, one who speaks for a god; then an interpreter of the will of a god; thus 'prophet' meant a 'spokesman for a god'. Now the Greek - as well as the Latin - preposition 
πρό (pro) could mean 'before' (time, place, person) as well as 'instead of'.

By interpreting 'prophet' as one who could and would foretell events, the basic concept of 'prophet' and 'prophecy' was changed in a very essential point. The meaning thus shifted from 'spokesman' to 'foreteller', so that the knowledge of future events was what actually became associated with the idea of prophecy. Accordingly, the truth of a prophecy, and the truthfulness of a prophet, were thought to be provable by checking the actual course of history against a prophet's utterances. When it was found that these two did very often not correspond, the obvious conclusion was that
prophecy as such 'failed the scientific test' and was thus 'disproved.' The next conclusion was to regard most, or even all, of those prophecies which did come true as later fabrications, or as sayings of 'inspired people' after the events had already taken place, which came then to be believed by their disciples or later generations to have been uttered before the events mentioned in them actually happened. 5

2. The Influence of Man's Actions on Y.'s Plans

Nevertheless there are prophecies which do foretell imminent events. Sometimes, a time limit is set for events to happen. But, the prophet is mostly not interested in making announcements of future historical events. What he says in fact is, e.g. that if the people continue to break their obligation of the covenant, Y. will retaliate by bringing upon them an enemy who will punish them. But this is clearly a 'Drohwort', a threat of impending punishment, in case the people continue their transgressions. What the prophetic word clearly implies - and often expressly says - is that the threatened divine retaliation is not unchangeable; on the contrary, it is the prophetic demand that the people should discontinue their sins so as to bring about a revocation of Y.'s intentions; as if Y. asked the people to cause a change of his intentions towards them. Very often the two alternative choices are clearly set before the people. 6

3. Prophecy as Interpretation of Divine - Human Correlation

The classical treatment of the conditioned prophecy is found in Jer 18:1-11, where it is most clearly stated that Y.'s
relationship to man is decisively influenced by man's actions. The main thought of this passage can be decisively influenced by man's actions expressed by two complementary sentences. 1. When Y. has announced to punish a people by destruction, but then the people has abandoned its transgressions Y. will reconsider and change his mind (םע ינש) by revoking his former intention (ותפושה). If, however, Y. has promised a people to reward them with the good things of life, but then the people did that which Y. disliked, he will likewise change his mind and revoke the good with which he had considered to reward them.

The conclusion from this passage is clearly that the behavior of man does have a definite influence on Y.'s reaction towards him. Therefore, if details of the divine plan change because of a change in human response, the prophet will not regard this as a weakness or inconsistency in Y. It is exactly here that he regards Y. as a 'living god', so very different from the unchangeable rigidity of a determined course of action (as typical of magic, eschatology and Greek motra.). It is important to point out that this thought might have led people to assume that man is able to influence Y. in such a way so that Y. is bound to act, according to man's deeds; which would change basically the Biblical concept of Y. in his relation to man. In order to prevent such a conclusion, even entirely forestall such an idea, the parable of the potter was prefaced to this passage so as to stress nonetheless the final, absolute, unconditional dependence of man on Y. Nevertheless, the point Jeremia doubt-
lessly wanted to make upon his contemporaries was that only a
der of their way of life as demanded by Y. was able to bring about a change
of Y.'s plan and intention which would otherwise be
carried out.

Therefore, prophecy is essentially not precognition in
the sense of an exact foreknowledge and prediction of future
events. It is, however, a limited prediction of Y.'s reaction
to man's behavior, either good or bad. For this purpose, Y.
is conceived of in terms of human personality: he will change
his mind when and if the human personality situation changes
either way, but with the express proviso that Y. reserves the
decision to himself. So that, Y.'s reaction cannot be con-
ditioned by man.
Notes on: Prophecy and Precognition

1. only in Neh 6:12, 2 Ch 15:8 (in 9:29 a book of prophecies must be meant); its meaning must be passive, like Divine, therefore: matters prophesied. The abstract meaning is of course medieval and modern.

2. To quote just one other example: the translation of the Hebrew 'emunah by "pistis" in the LXX, which was taken over later by the NT. This semantic shift consequently brought about theological changes of great importance.

3. Cf. the Latin 'proconsul; 'pronomem' (pronoun) for the second meaning.


5. This subject need not be continued here, as the older, erroneous view has been superseded by the more exact definition of prophecy. It may only be pointed out that popular beliefs, even when erroneous, disappear very slowly, and the almost 'classical' case of a prophet as a forerunner of events is certainly a case in point. In order to get rid of the popular misunderstanding, it has been suggested to abandon the terms prophet (and prophecy) altogether and to use instead the Hebrew term nabi. This has e.g. been done by Jepsen who called his book about prophets "Nabi".
Notes to: Prophecy and Precognition (cont'd)

6. E.g. 2 K 19, Jer 38


8. These were already the "attached conditions" of the Sinai Covenant (Lev. 26) and the one made before the entry of Israel into western Palestine (Dt 28); see Mendenhall, Law and Covenant in Israel and the ANE, Pittsburgh, Pa., 1955, p. 34, para 6. For exact historical situations cf. Jos 24:14-20; 1 S 12:25; Jer 38:17-18; in prophetic speech; Is 1:19-20, Jer 4:1, 7:1-15.

9. Thus "niḥamti" has to be translated. Cf. ḫb, etc., all verbs whose meanings are not limited to a certain mental process (or state of mind), but extends as well to the taking of an action caused by that process. See e.g. Gen, Ex 2:24-25, 20:8, and Dt. 2:7. For ḫhkh."niḥamti" in such a situation cf. Is 15:11; for a change because of prayer, Am 7:3, 6; Ex 32:12; Ju 2:18.

10. Actually Jeremia speaks about a people, a nation; when later, during and after the destruction of Juda and Jerusalem the justice of Y. is questioned, a similar answer is given concerning the individual: Ez 18; Jer 31:28-29.

11. See
Notes to: Prophecy and Precognition (cont'd)

12. As e.g. 1 S 15:29

13. This is basically the problem of the Book of Job. Job, having been righteous, assumes that Y. is bound to reward him favorably, at least not to punish him for transgressions which he knows he has not committed.

14. Therefore, human behavior is of decisive importance, and the will of Y. does not act blindly, unpredictably, like an unchangeable natural force. For the importance of this point for the comparison with ANE gods, see the 3rd chapter.
Chapter 2 Part 6

The Teachings of Israelite Prophecy

1. The Difficulty of Defining Prophecy

Treatment of prophecy has often been limited by Biblical scholars to its so-called "classical" period, to the exclusion of its earlier periods, especially of anything before the 11th century, to which the Song of Deborah belongs. Once it is admitted that prophecy did exist at earlier periods as well, its definition becomes more comprehensive. Prophecy is a rather complex phenomenon by itself, and probably no single adequate definition can be given of it. We shall try to approach prophecy from several aspects, the way the prophets themselves might have described it; a critical, objective evaluation will be given later.

2. The Widest Definition of Prophecy

One might as well begin with certain definitions and implications of the Bible itself. Israelite prophecy will then contain everything that the so-called 'true' prophets spoke in Y.'s name, excluding then the so-called 'false' prophets; 'true' and 'false' to be applied in the sense used by the Bible itself. As a prophet would put it, whatever Y. would speak to him. It might be addressed to the prophet himself or to any other person(s), or to the whole of the Israelite people; likewise to any foreigner(s), foreign peoples, even to the whole of mankind.

As to time, prophecy most often concerns primarily the time at which the prophetic utterance was made; it can also refer to the past, reaching back to the beginnings of the
Israelite people or even to the creation of man and his world by Y.; more often than not, the immediate future is concerned; sometimes the far future – extending even to the end of human history, as envisaged by the prophets. In addition to this wide range of peoples and times, its contents touches upon almost any subject of human life: it is concerned with religion more than anything else. But religion, contrary to modern Western usage, was never entirely absent in the ANE from any sphere of human life; agriculture and cattle breeding, the yearly cycle of nature, the cycle of man’s life from birth to death, family and social life, ethics and politics, temples and sacred literature. Religion was then not confined and restricted to a rather narrow segment of human life ("compartmentalized"), as it is today in modern Western society. Thus the subject-matter of Israelite prophecy is so encompassing and so varied in its contents as almost defying description.

In order to arrive at a more specific and exact concept of prophecy, the following paragraphs shall deal with some of the more important aims for which the prophets fought, including some of the ideas and ways of life against which their fight was directed.

3. The Fight of Prophetic Religion against Israelite Folk-Religions

Concerning Israel, the contents of prophecy is almost identical with Biblical, or, more exact, Prophetic religion, for the simple reason that the prophets were the propagators of their own type of religion, especially when contrasted with Israelite popular religion.
From this aspect, the main aim and therefore contents of prophecy can be defined as the fight for the establishment and maintenance of Prophetic religion as opposed to Canaanite religion, Israelite folk religion, and later foreign religious influence. The whole of Biblical history can be viewed as such a fight, ending with a final victory of Prophetic religion in Israel.

The elements of Canaanite religion were felt by the Patriarchs, and later by many Israelites, to be opposed strongly to their own moral feelings and practices. Much of the material of the law codes ascribed to Moses - and especially the so-called apodictic law - can be shown to contain injunctions against specific Canaanite practices. Thus, much of the legal matter contained in the several law codes of the Pentateuch has also to be included into the contents of prophecy, because it conforms to standards of prophetic teachings.

4. Prophecy as a Means to Realize Y.'s Plan as to Israel

Prophecy can likewise be regarded as a means of realization of Y.'s plan as to Israel and mankind, from its inception by Abraham to its final establishment in its promised country, and later to Israel's role as mediator of Y. in his relation to all nations, bringing about finally a conversion of the whole of mankind to the belief in the divinity of Y. - viewed as the prophetic concept of the final goal of human history. This doctrine was developed particularly during the period of
classical prophecy from Amos to the Second Isaiah. It may very well go back to earlier ideas of such kind, especially found in the Genesis about Abraham at the very beginning of the history of the prophetic movement (Gen 12:1-3, 22:18, 26:5), and later again at the Sinai Covenant (Ex 19:5-6, Dt 7:6, 14:2). If Solomon's allusion to Y.'s reputation beyond Israel (1 K 8:41-43) is only conventional, or a genuine expression of the concept of a supranational god, is debatable. But the inclusion of the unique status of Israel in relation to Y. and to "all the nations of the earth" in this prayer (1 K 8:53, 60; cf. Dt. 4:35, 39), referring back to the Sinai Covenant and Deuteronomy, is clearly an indication of a theological thought appropriate at that occasion.

5. **Prophetic Religion as Covenantal Obligations**

The role of Israel in Y.'s plan would then consist of the observation of its covenantal obligations as continually demanded by its prophets. The way the Bible has it is that these obligations in the form of a contractual relationship begin with Abraham, were received and accepted by the Israelite people in form of the Sinai Covenant made with Y. by the mediation of Moses, not only for their generation, but for subsequent ones as well. This covenant was renewed several times in biblical history by later generations, necessitated by certain historical events and conditions. As understood and interpreted by them, these obligations were, or came to be, equivalent with the observation of the commandments of the Pentateuch.
6. Prophetic Religion as Subordination under the Will of Y.

Another definition can be given in terms of personal relationship between Y. and man: it is the absolute, unconditional ethical demand, motivated by exclusively religious terms: man should always do that which Y. approves. He should constantly feel himself to be in such a situation as if he were confronted by Y. himself. Expressed in theological terms, this should always be consistent with Y.'s will and demand as formulated by any of his modes of revelation - by his prophets, by his laws, even by the implicit teachings of the historical books written by the prophets and their followers.

7. The Imitation of Y. by Man

To arrive at a more substantial definition, certain divine attributes as (excluding those of retaliation) can be said to constitute the essence of prophetic theology. The classical prophets stress the point that these attributes characterize Y.'s relationship to Israel, his chosen people in past, present and future, and that Israel should therefore likewise display them as the other partner of the covenant, but also in their relations between man and man. In future, the same relationship is to be established between Y. and all mankind, as well as between Israel and all the nations. The positive aspect of Y.'s message is man's recognition and realization of Y.'s absolute rule over the universe as its creator and sustainer, to the exclusion of any other gods and agents. Second, man's recognition of Y.'s role in human history as the one who shapes
3. Results

Israelite prophecy is a phenomenon complex by its length of time, its rather various manifestations and often divergent personalities. It had a tremendous impact on the whole of Israelite religion at all its periods, actually being its essence. Prophecy is then first of all the manifestation of Y.'s will through his messengers, and as such an extension of his personality. It puts man into the dimensions of a divinely ordained history - from the creation of the world for man to the end of human history, but always focusing its immediate demands on the present. The election of Israel within the framework of human history was intended to carry his message of a new relationship between him and man through them to the whole of mankind. This will be affected by them only by becoming an ideal society fulfilling their legal and moral obligations - all of them religiously motivated - towards one another and towards Y. This obligation is stated in legally binding covenantal terms, and a continuous claim is made upon every Israelite to act always according to them and to behave as if constantly being faced by Y. himself, his partner of the covenant. Thus the ideal Israel will carry Y.'s message to mankind. The positive aspect of Y.'s message is man's recognition and realization of Y.'s absolute rule over the universe as its creator and sustainer, to the exclusion of any other gods and agents. Second, man's recognition of Y.'s role in human history as the one who shapes it towards the realization of his rule over mankind; man's contribution expressing itself by cooperating with Y. towards attainment of
that goal. Third, man's imitation of Y.'s relation to him: although Y. demands obedience to his laws, and consequently rewards and punishes man according to his deeds, he does so in such a way that his mercy and forgiveness always outweigh by far his stern justice (Ex 34:6-7).^ Therefore, man should imitate and emulate Y. by making, hesed, mishpat, and sedeqah (Jer 9:23) his guiding principles in his social relations rather than stern justice, or, in short, justice tempered by compassion.
Chapter 2 Part 7

The Prophet as a Messenger of Y.

1. The concept of prophecy as found in the Bible is that of a divinely inspired message, and the prophet of a divinely directed messenger - the way the prophet himself would put it.

The task of a prophet is described by the root פלכ of the word פלך used by Y in relation to his prophet, meaning: to send, to make someone a messenger, to entrust a message to someone.

The relationship between the prophet and the god who sends him is often expressed by the two complementary words פֶּלֶךְ and פָּלַכְ. It is therefore clearly that of a master, telling his servant, actually commanding him, what to do.

2. The classical formulation of the obligation a prophet was expected to take upon himself is found in the first prophecy of Jeremiah:

a prophet to the nations I have appointed you.... to whomsoever I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Verily I have appointed you today on nations and kingdoms...." (Jer 1:5,7,10)

3. The prophet was mostly sent to Israel, sometimes also to peoples outside Israel, and they in matters concerning their relations to Israel, especially from the time of the Schriftpropheten about 800 B.C.E. This double function of a prophet is inextricably bound up with the universalistic concept of Y.
who came to be regarded by the prophets as the God of Israel and of all the nations. This stands in sharp contrast to the ANE concept of a god whose power is limited to a certain geographical region; remnants of this concept are still found in the Bible. Messages to the nations became quite common when Israel and Judah became involved in international politics during the 9th century, and even more so during the 8th century and later, with the ascent of Assyria as an international power.

Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Second Isaiah—all of their books contain relatively large orations about, often against, foreign states, from Elam and Babylonia in the east to Egypt in the southwest of Israel and Judah.

1. The task of the prophet was to be fulfilled under all circumstances, even the most difficult conditions, which could easily bring death to a prophet. Some prophets were assured of Y.'s help, but others were killed during persecutions or at the time of fulfilling their prophetic task. The life of a prophet must often have been rather hard, when that of Elia or Jeremia is considered.

5. Interestingly enough, the prophet is not only to convey the divine message to those to whom he is sent, which was more often than not a threat of an imminent punishment; he is supposed as well to intervene for their sake, Israelites and non-Israelites alike, before Y., his god. Likewise, when approached by the people, he is expected to pray and ask forgiveness for them, or on behalf of them. Thus he is actually a mediator, and his task as a "paraklet" should not be regarded as secondary.
6. Once he is made part of (introduced into) the "divine council", he is not only there to be told its decision, but also, to a certain extent, permitted, even expected, to state his own opinion, especially in defence of the people to be judged. This is best exemplified by the two occasions at which Moses was given to understand that he should intervene before Y. for the sake of his (Moses') people to whom he was sent, and whose leader he was at the same time.
Notes to Chapter Two - Part Seven


3. But 'servant' does not necessarily have the low status associated with English word. Cf. the Hebrew which is comparable to that of a high court official: 1K 10:8 1Sam 22:14 Jer 38:7 then generally of someone highly esteemed by Y.: Nu 12:7 2Sam 7:5 Is 42:1.

4. Am 1-3, 9; Jer 2 Mi 4. If this was a later development beginning with the Schriftpropheten or is already inherent in earlier material is a much debated issue. Our view tends to the latter view, because even the earlier history of Israel is already conceived in its international setting. Cf. Gen 15:13-16 Ex 15:14-15 Dt 32:8. The same issue applies to the oracles of Balaam, in which the situation and history of Israel is set against the background of other peoples.

5. Cf. Gen 28:13-21. The revelation of Y. outside the domicile of his father was a surprise to Jacob (v.16). As to the limitation of worshipping a god in his country, Cf. 1Sam 26:19 and Ruth 1:16.

6. Even when an ANE god is called "god of the world", there were still many other gods believed to exist beside him, some of them might be given the same epithet.
7. The coalition of Aramean princes (kings) against Assyria, in 854 BCE to which Ahab materially contributed with a large army, is not mentioned in the Bible.


9. The prophets of Y. during the persecutions of Ahab and Iz 1K 18:13, 19:10; the prophet Uriah at the time of Jeremiah — Jer 26:20-23.

10. Elia — 1K 18, 19, 22; Jeremiah — Jer 12, 20, 26, 38; 2Chr 24:20-21 36:16.

11. Gen 20:7 (Abraham for Avimelekh), Ex 8:5-8, 24-26 9:28-33 10:17-18 (Moses and Aaron — for Pharaoh and the Egyptians to stop the plagues); ISam 7:8,10 (Samuel for the Israelites); 2K 19 (Isaia for the Israelites during the Assyrian siege); Jer 7:16 where Jeremiah is told not to pray for the Israelites because of their idolatrous transgressions) and Jer 42:2 (Jeremiah for a group of fugitives after the destruction of Jerusalem). See also Ps 99:6.


13. Ex 32:7-14 Nu 14:11-20 Dt 9:18-20,25-29; to which may be added Abraham's intervention for the people of the five cities, Gen 18:17-33.
The material of the relationship between a prophet and his God can only be taken from the experiences of the prophets themselves, as they have come down to later generations in written texts. As always, the question of reliability arises, of the textus receptus as well as of its possible oral and written development until it was written down in its final, present form. Here, the following picture develops:

1. There cannot be any doubt as to the phenomenon of the prophets' overwhelming experience of their utter dependence on Y., their god. This experience, described in their respective books, is couched in different terms. Similar experiences, it should be noted, are found also in the Psalms and in Job. Even if certain changes due to the development of the text are accounted for, the fact of this very fundamental experience cannot be regarded in any way as secondary. The differences among these descriptions, which are very remarkable, are due to individual variations in character and mentality of the prophets; actually, they are most important material for the understanding of each prophet's personality. Nevertheless, out of the divine literary material there evolves a basis of experiences common to almost all prophets.

2. Some of the relevant experiences take place at the time when a man is made prophet, when he is first addressed by Y. and commissioned for his task, as e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah and Moses. Their quite different reactions are noteworthy: Isaiah readily agrees, even volunteers for his task, and never complains at anytime of his prophet's career which must have
been of considerable length. Jeremia tries at first to refuse, but overpowered by Y.'s words and authority, he then submits to his will. Later his plight caused by his mission breaks out at certain situations, and his feelings are described with utter frankness. (A later generation, even the prophet's own disciples, might have changed some of their teacher's more outspoken wording. The fact that the present text still contains bold and extreme phrases seems to indicate quite clearly that these utterances can only be ascribed to the prophet himself.) But he always yields anew to return to the harsh obligations of the mission he has once taken upon himself, until he successfully fulfilled it for more than 40 years. Moses is the one who most steadfastly refused to accept the task demanded from him, even after having been assured Y.'s help, until he raised Y.'s wrath against him. After his brother's help was promised to him, Moses grudgingly yielded and even then revolted the after-time. His task, however, was incomparably greater and far more difficult than that of any other prophet, because of the political implications of the planned liberation and exodus, making demands of religious-political leadership from him. Later, Moses' various reactions and complaints when finding himself in difficult situations are of utmost interest, but cannot be dealt with here.

3. In any discussions between them, Y's answers to a prophet's arguments are of such a kind that the prophet has actually no choice. The Book of Jona, probably a literary composition for pedagogic purposes used in prophetic circles, endeavors to show that a prophet, trying to escape his res-
his faculty of judgement and normal speech, his will-power, even when speaking with his god, (and certainly after the prophetic experience) to such a degree that he is capable of refusing (a mission assigned to him or) a task to be fulfilled by him. This is what the texts clearly imply, which is borne out by the reason that otherwise the ensuing discussions would not make sense. Again, this experience of the prophet is very unlike that of the mystic whose human personality has somehow been effaced, has disappeared in the state of unio mystica, of becoming and then being unified with his god. That fact that the prophets do retain their human consciousness and powers of their faculties during their dialogue with their god is of importance, as it does not diminish nor essentially change their human nature as such.
Notes to Chapter Two - Part Eight

1. Ex 3-4 Jer 6 Jer 1 are perhaps the most famous and revealing ones. Cf. also Amos 5:3-8.

2. Ps 51, 139.


4. Apart from time and place and possible dialectical differences.

5. For the importance of the prophet's dependence on Y. see also ch. 5.


7. Cf. G. Van der Leeuw, Religion in Essence and Manifestation, ch. 75 /1, 3.
The Prophetic Dialogue

1. A dialogue is different from an usual talk between two persons by being distinguished by several features: there is supposed to be a certain understanding as regards the contents and the aim of the subject to be discussed, together with a common interest in it, and, finally, a certain degree of equality between the two partners of the dialogue, or in other words, a common basis between them; may their other differences in status and opinion be as wide as they happen to be. (In German: the difference between "Gespräch" and "Zwiesprache")

2. For a true dialogue, even something more is required: a certain emotional bond between its two participants, which can be expressed by 'sympathy', a kind of mutual understanding beyond the relatively simple term of 'agreement'; it might be called a kind of common feeling and attitude towards certain basic problems, and especially those to be discussed.

3. On the other hand, a true dialogue will rarely end by full acceptance of the views of one partner will full, unconditional surrender; the creation of a feeling of harmony between its participants might be called an achievement, even if, as far a details are concerned, no full agreement is reached, perhaps not even expected. The value of such a dialogue would then consist of the acceptance of the other partner on equal terms, of a creation of a harmonious atmosphere, of the stating of common aims and goals, notwithstanding the basically different positions taken by its participants.
4. Once these definitions of a dialogue are agreed upon, and accepted, it can be shown that many of the talks, between Y. and his prophets can be comprehended in terms of such a dialogue. The common basis is the welfare of Y's people; the common purpose is to find means and ways to achieve that end, within the conditions laid down in the covenantal relationship between Y. and his people. Both sides - Y. and his prophets - agree that justice, to be tempered by mercy under certain conditions and circumstances, has to prevail.

5. In these dialogues, the human partner is accepted, in a way, as an equal partner; who has still, nevertheless, to realize his own position in contrast to that of his so very unequal partner. But the prophet's claims and arguments are always listened to and given full consideration; sometimes his entreaties are accepted by Y. In exceptional cases, it is even suggested to the prophet to state his opinion. As he is also the "paraklet" of his people, this role of his is also taken into account, so that his opinion is a weighty one. In short, it is Y. who invites man to take part in his divine council; and if not actually to make judicial decisions for Y., at least to understand and realize that a decision, different from the view he put forward, has to be accepted and carried out.

6. All this holds good as longs as the prophet deals with matters concerning the people. His own personal matters and troubles are narrated only as far as they are related to and of importance to his task in regard to the people. Therefore, purely private matters of a prophet are never discussed in these dialogues.
Analysis of Prophetic Experience

1. "The individual upon whom the grace of God has come remains a mystery". This felicitous sentence of J. Wellhausen has not yet lost any of its originality, and still is the best starting point of an analysis of prophetic experience. The phenomenon of human consciousness cannot yet be explained by reducing it to simpler elements, and modern psychology has not been able to suggest any new solutions in this field.

2. The prophets were deeply convinced that the source of their message was divine—superhuman, suprahuman, as we would term it today. Then naturally the question arises whether any part of the prophet's consciousness may have been affected in an abnormal way; also, whether his power of spiritual vision may have been abnormally intensified. (An affirmative answer to the first question would relegate prophetic consciousness to abnormal psychology). As a matter of fact, this aspect of the prophet's mind has been compared to that of an artist and a poet, whose mind in certain moments may also be said to be creative by extreme intensification of one (or more) of its faculties. A Greek poet would similarly relate such a kind of feeling to the inspiration of a god; but to him this was largely only a mode of expression. Pressed for an explanation, he would barely be able to give one, even less would he think of a personal god thus addressing himself to him. But this is exactly what the Israelite prophets claim. Once this superhuman impression is admitted — whatever its actual source may have
been -- the prophet's increased sensitiveness, awareness beyond the normal human range, is psychologically quite understandable. This awareness can then easily translate itself into a kind of more intensive consciousness capable of realisation and perception beyond the range of ordinary human experience. This knowledge often expresses itself by visions of what lies beyond the ordinary concatenation of events. The prophets claim to be able to "see" (this is the most frequent expression for their unusual vision), when speaking about their typically prophetic faculty. Thus they claim to "see" signs or unusual matters, or even the godhead itself (whatever the limitations imposed upon them may be) when receiving a prophetic message.

3. An important factor in the analysis of prophetic experience is that although the prophets are subjected to abnormal influences, their consciousness is not obliterated by them, nor even diminished, but, on the contrary, rather more intensified. The same holds true of their memory (most often they relate later what they saw in their prophetic state of mind), and particularly their will-power. The importance of this aspect lies in the state of prophetic consciousness when a prophet is confronted by his god in a prophetic dialogue. There cannot be much doubt that prophetic consciousness was sometimes affected to a certain extent by psychic phenomena like trance, clairvoyance, ecstasy, frenzy, unconsciousness, mystical 'immersion'. Proofs for the one or another of these can be found among prophetic, or inspired writings of the Bible. But Israelite prophecy cannot be equated with any one of these (for reasons stated below), even if their influence is admitted; apart from
the difficulty of analyzing exactly from the Hebrew text of prophetic writings of c. 2500-3000 years ago such abnormal states of mind.

4. Another possibility would be to label the prophetic consciousness as self-deception. But there are some weighty objections to this view. There is at first the deep conviction of the prophets that their god spoke to them, a conviction to which they devoted their whole life, and for which they were even ready to die. **Second**, the ethical content of their teachings makes this assumption at least extremely improbable. Third, Israelite prophets were never accused of that in their time. The only argument they sometimes had to contend with was that Y. had not spoken to them – which, by the way, is exactly the same argument the 'true' prophets brought against the so-called 'false' ones. This argument is of course unanswerable in the final analysis. When it was once brought against Jeremiah (26:11-16, especially 15-16, from which the accusation in v. 11 becomes clear), he can only repeat (twice, v. 12 and 15) that Y. really sent him. As convincingly pointed out, the phenomenon of Israelite prophecy would have been impossible if some of the peculiar influence felt by the few (prophets) had not been shared to some extent by a whole nation, who basically never doubted the messages of their prophets, and did not deny their divine origin, which the prophets claimed.

5. Finally, prophecy would not be possible without revelation and inspiration. Both terms express the working of the prophetic mind as to its reception of the supramundane message. Inspiration is the condition of prophetic consciousness in its relation to its god. Whenever the prophets speak about the
reception of their message they indicate that their god revealed himself to them by transmitting to them some of his 'spirit' (see below) to make them recipients of his messages. It is absolutely essential to realize that the prophets never proclaimed their ideas and announcements as their own. They spoke as if their minds were, so to speak, transmitters of divine truths. Therefore they distinguish between their own, private words, and those which they claimed had been imparted to them by their god. (The writings of the prophets therefore include almost only inspired words, but very few private utterings of prophets). When their mind was possessed by inspiration, they felt themselves forced to announce the divine word, because, as they felt, that divine power was not within them, but beyond them, and so much greater and stronger than their own. This aspect is prominently brought out again in the dialogue between them and their god.

6. The prophets' descriptions of their own prophetic experiences are quite rare and scanty; still rarer are descriptions by other persons who witnessed these experiences. There are probably several explanations for this: the restraint of the ecstatic moment within the "prophetic process" proper, and the subsequent 'inner' censorship; then, the prophetic experience, as far as it displayed any peculiar outward trends, was apparently taken for granted by its contemporaries. To them there was nothing extraordinary in the different, peculiar, abnormal behaviour of a prophet.

7. The most conspicuous phenomenon is undoubtedly that which, when defined and analyzed, is commonly called prophetic ecstasy. Unfortunately, this term has been used in different ways by various writers. But what generally is meant, are the abnormal psychic
phenomena accompanying the "prophetic process" proper. By now it is generally accepted that the ecstatic manifestations of Israelite prophecy are to be equated with innumerable like and similar phenomena to be found in almost all religions. A more exact evaluation of these phenomena in Biblical prophecy is difficult because, as already shown, the problems of origins (Mari) and probable Canaanite ecstatic influence are not yet fully solved, and the material available does not so far admit of definite conclusions. We doubt very much whether the substitution of modern psychological approach and use of such terms as has sometimes been attempted, will bring us any nearer to an understanding of the psychic processes of about 3000 years ago in the ANE, when they were receiving what they believed to be divine messages.

8. On the other hand, apart from the psychic processes accompanying the reception of the message, the state of mind of the prophet, his feeling and reaction of being and living as a prophet, executing his mission under varying circumstances, is sometimes vividly described by the prophets themselves, and therefore of considerable interest. It then appears that one of the dominant aspects of Israelite prophecy, perhaps its most important one, is its dialectical character, based upon a continuous always-present dialogue, between the prophet and Y. The basic 'human-divine' situation is that of a particular relationship of common interest and mutual intersens sympathy between the two so unequal participants of this kind of dialogue. It is this dialectical divine-human bond communion which perhaps more than any other trait reveals the essence of the prophetic message as such. Even if it appears to
be a monologue, an address, or a prayer to Y., he always is there ('da' ist), even when no answer is forthcoming (or recorded).
Likewise, an apparently 'one-way' prophetic address to the people is, in its final analysis, always an outcome of a prior dialogue between the prophet and Y., so to speak, in which the condition and the situation of the people have been discussed between them.

2. This dialectical concept of prophecy is probably the most powerful key to an understanding of Israelite prophecy, bringing out exactly that moment of which it is most characteristic, but likewise most different from any other similar phenomena, and especially from ANE divination.
3rd Chapter: The Diviner and the Prophet:

Comparison and Contrast

1. Their Functions in Society

2. The Difference: the Ethical Concern

3. Prescience of Diviner and Prophet

4. Encounters between Diviners and Prophets in the Bible

5. "Man Creates his Gods in his Own Image"
1. Their Respective Functions and Roles in Society

The fundamental problem of ANE man was helpless when confronted with vicissitudes of nature and fate. As the gods were believed to rule the physical and biological world, including man, how could one find out the will of these gods who decided man's fate? Basically it was a very practical and eminently vital question which concerned agriculture and animal raising, human health and sickness, life and death. How could one avert harmful and noxious influences of gods and demons (both called 'elims')? What should one do in order not to provoke their anger? Which god or goddess was responsible for what, and how should he or she be approached?

"In any polytheistic system the gods, by virtue of their multiplicity and limitation of power, are incapable of securing ... for nature and for mankind the stability and security essential for the continuation of things as they are." This situation forced ANE man to take resort to divination and magic. Because of the inherent complexity of the subject, in the course of time, the professional diviner and magician came to furnish the answers and to advise the petitioner what to do.

A similar situation existed in ancient Israel. The important difference was that all natural powers were believed to be concentrated in one god, Y. Nevertheless, the basic problem of course remained: the unknown but decisive attitude of this god towards the individual. So the ancient Israelite would likewise go to a prophet to obtain his answer and advice, or to a priest who would interpret for him the law,
understood as an expression of the divine will.

Therefore, in spite of the large differences between the diviner-magician and the prophet, both fulfilled virtually the same functions in their communities. As their advice was sought, particularly by important people, as e.g. kings, they would serve in the same capacity of councillors announcing to them the will or decision of the god(s). Whereas the diviner would not be able to furnish an answer without using the devices of omens, lots, hepatoscopy, etc., the prophet would need only his god's word to announce his own response. Thus both of them often occupied important positions by their influence on matters of policy. The direction of the diviner was certainly mostly followed; which, however, was often not the case with that of the prophets.

Thus the diviner as well as the prophet constituted the absolutely necessary intermediary link between man and his often natural phenomena, conceived by him as gods, and, in the case of an Israelite prophet, regarded as manifestation of Y., the one god, omnipotent ruler of all natural phenomena.
2. The Difference: The Ethical Concern

The question must be asked whether there were any ethical considerations involved in the answers which the respective spokesmen gave in the name of their god(s). Their assertions namely that the prophet faithfully transmitted the words of Y. his god, and the diviner the decisions of his gods, are to be taken here at their face value, as they were in their own times.

As to the prophet, there felt that he had a heavy moral responsibility to announce what he believed was a message entrusted to him by Y. his god. Chosen as his messenger, he could not free himself from this obligation which is once aptly likened to that of a watchman. He had to carry out his task even if it would bring him death. He demanded - in the name of his god to be sure, - fulfillment of religious ethical obligations, observance of the convenant, social justice demands which often did not make the prophet more beloved to the people. But his conscience would not permit him to change or omit anything from his message, whose source was for him divine and whose command was for him unconditional.

This situation of the diviner was different. According to him, his gods would generally withhold their knowledge from man. He himself, being "the preserver of the secrets of the great gods," was bound to keep secret that which he had received. As could only be expected, this secrecy greatly contributed to his important social position. His gods had to be approached by gifts and sacrifices, by certain rituals and prayers known to him only, which were the only means to
make the gods reveal their knowledge to man. It was only he who was capable of recognizing omens and interpreting them. The answers of the gods were mostly what might be called information of almost technical nature in the religious sense. They concerned e.g. an answer to the question whether the outcome of a planned battle was favourable or not, whether a sick king would live or die, the choice of an auspicious day for laying the foundation of a temple. It has to be stressed that the function of the diviner was limited to matters similar to these, as can be shown from extant texts, because was an official of the temple. Personally he was not involved in the information given by him, which was unchangeable like the will of his gods. Whether his word was accepted or not was not important to his clients, not to him. Emotionally, he was indifferent to their fate, unconcerned about them.

The fact remains that rather technical function of the diviner and his relation to his gods did never make him the carrier of an ethical message; nor do we know of any diviner who became a social or ethical reformer. Perhaps he was constitutionally incapable of recognizing an ethical relationship as main foundation between man and his gods. The reason has to be sought in the concept of his gods. First, their genesis: they were to him externalized and then personified, identified with natural phenomena. Second, their multitude: in any polytheistic system there is an inherent weakness of clashing claims and rivalries of its gods. Moreover, their mythology reflected the struggle of natural powers as well as weaknesses of human characters, even exposure to magical potency and sicknesses very much like human beings. Third, the diviner's
relationship with his gods was based essentially on cult and ritual, much less on morality, although this trait is certainly not altogether absent. It was the prime function of man to serve the gods who regulated nature for him. Thus man’s attitude towards them tended to be influenced by fear, transferring his dread of unpredictable natural phenomena, of calamities and disasters, to them. One cannot, after all, establish a meaningful personal relationship with such gods who somehow lacked essential human traits. "The private person...was...devoid of the redeeming support of personal moral responsibility."

"Mesopotamian civilization — only rarely and rather reluctantly — admits that the deity can use man as a vehicle for the expression of divine intentions." Therefore the prophetic concept of their god, prophetic religion, was very different from ANE (Mesopotamian, as well as Canaanite and Egyptian) religions, which were deeply steeped in divination and magic so that they rarely — and if so, incompletely — possessed an ethical impetus religiously motivated. None of them succeeded in making their gods an ethically active and socially cohesive force.

3. Presence of Diviner and Prophet

As already shown, the main function of the diviner was to furnish to his client such information as he needed to protect him against possible damage and sickness, etc. His aim was strictly practical, almost utilitarian; to make his client’s life happier, free of fear of unpredictable calamity.
The prophet's aim was entirely different. Y.'s god, was neither identified with natural phenomena nor was he limited by them. Thus he was not made the personification of all natural phenomena, but their absolute ruler; being above them, he was free to use them according to his will, which was conceived of as essentially good. Moreover, the prophets sublimated him by attributing him a moral essence manifesting itself by his personality, with 'human' traits to make him communicative with man. Thus they made a theological principle out of monism, or, in other words they conceived of the unifying principle of what the Greeks called cosmos, that which unites disparate phenomena into a coordinated world, as a personal being.

The prophet's conviction was that Y. operated towards man by consistent rules to which his rewards and punishments conformed and were not dispensed by mere divine caprice. Accordingly, in the final analysis man's action determined Y.'s re-action and hence man was ultimately responsible for his own fate. Thus natural and historical events became meaningful to him as expressions of Y.'s divine disposition towards him. The prophets felt that it was Y.'s their god, who out of his compassion for man and particularly his people, sent them to warn them of impending disasters because of their transgressions. The idea was not to protect them from these natural or political disasters, but rather to teach them that the event to happen was pre-ordained by Y. so as to punish them for their transgressions. But unlike blind, senseless natural or political events, it was never irrevocably bound to happen. Y. possessed also the power to revoke it, to alter it, to
render it altogether harmless. But he would do so only whenever a change of the people's behavior would justify it. Thus even apparently blind, senseless events were fraught with meaning, suggestive of the workings of Y. In case the threats and warnings went unheeded and the predicted disaster struck, the prophets would teach the people the lesson to be learnt from their failure, consisting of the interrelation between their own behavior and that of Y.'s retribution.

Thus prophetic prescience and prediction became a means to a religiously motivated moral end, rather different from the aim of the diviner to protect his client from impending danger so as to make his life happier.

4. **Encounters Between Diviners and Prophets in the Bible**

The Bible contains several narratives in which representatives of ANE religions and Israelite prophetic religion meet, clashing in their respective claims for the divinity of the gods in whose name they spoke.

To the first group, apart from diviners, belong also priests, magicians, astrologers, interpreters of dreams, 'wise men'. In Canaan, prophets of the Baal (and Ashera) and the so-called false prophets are to be included as well, perhaps also professional dreamers and visionaries. The second group is mainly represented by the prophets, but sometimes also by very gifted, but not necessarily divinely inspired persons (Joseph).

The encounters as recorded in the Bible took place in Egypt (Joseph, Moses and Aaron), Canaan (Elija, Micaia, Jeremia) and Babylonia (Daniel, although only legendary.)
is always discussed on the background of actual events, the attributes which were believed to constitute valid proofs for a claim of divinity can be clearly recognized. Naturally, everywhere the superiority and the singular status of Y, the god of Israel in relation to XXXXXX other gods is stressed. The representatives of Y, underestimate their own abilities, thus emphasizing Y.'s greatness and the fact that they are only his messengers. When Moses and Aaron put their demands before Pharoa, they do so as messengers of Y., the god of Israel who has sent them, and not as representatives of the people. This of course is important as also Pharoa was considered the son of his god. Likewise, Joseph and Daniel in their encounters with diviners, magicians and interpreters of dreams make the point that their apparent wisdom is really not theirs but Y.'s.

In disputes between true and false prophets, XXXXXX the valid proof which of two conflicting prophecies XXXXXX is the one truly sent by Y, consists of the actual arrival of the event itself.

These encounters are therefore important for the understanding of religious issues between ancient Israel and its neighbours, as they show in which way Israelite prophetic religion, being opposed to ANE religions, was able to hold its own by proving its superiority even to foreigners, at least as to its own people in times of doubt. It was on this plane that it presented its own specific religious character — in a rather different way from later times, when Judaism clashed with Hellenistic and Oriental religions, and still later with Christianity and Islam.
The differences between diviner and prophet are immense. They concern the fundamental attitudes of their religions as well as their impact on human life. The central point is the mutual relationship between them and their respective god(s). The concept of either god, the diviner's as well as the prophet's, reflect accurately the attitude of his worshipper. It is the difference between the prophet who projects his god as an all-powerful, transcendent lord and creator of universe and man, and between the diviner-magician who claims to be able to obtain the secrets of his god, by means of a secret system he believes to possess; between the one claiming to receive his inspiration from his god as his messenger for a religiously motivated ethical purpose, for the sake of his own people and mankind in general, and between the one who, because of his not purely technical function, is concerned with moral and human questions. Somehow ANE man could never free himself entirely from these ideas which more than anything else reflect their own human projection, of their weaknesses and instability.

This chapter began with the situation, social position and function common to both diviner and prophet, and ended how each of them arrived at a radically different solution. The differences proved to be of utmost relevance for the understanding of the perhaps most important issue in the history of ANE religions - between an anthropocentric religion in which the real ruler is man, and in which its rather anthropomorphic gods are no more than idols and objects to its highest official, and between a theocentric religion in which its god is for his
Chapter 3 - Notes

1. See Ch. 1, part I, #1, 2

2. "Mundolson, ed. Magic, Magician" in

3. Meissner 52; A.L. Oppenheim; IDB, 300a: "The private person, however, was far removed from any intimate or personal contact with the cult of the gods"... See also #2 below.

4. "To inquire of God" is found in all parts of the Bible: Gen 25:22, 1 Sam 9:9, Is 9:12, 2 K 2, Ez 20:1-3.

5. Lev 13:2; Nu 27:21; Dt 17:9-11, 24:8, 33:10; Jer 18:18; Mi 3:11.

6. See ch. 1, part 2 #9, ch. 2, and ch. 4 part 2 #1.

7. ANE man does not personify natural phenomena, but he recognizes them as personality and does not conceive of them in any other way. (T.H. Gaster)


Notes to: Chapter 3 (cont'd)

16. With the notable exception of the Pharaoh Akhnaton (=Amenhotep IV, 1369-1353 BCE) whose ideas of a monotheistic religion was however immediately destroyed by his successors.

17. Cf. ch. 2.

18. Priests: 1 Sam 6:2, 15 47, 3

Interpreters of dreams: Jer 27:9

Wise Men (= wise in any of these subjects): Gen 41:8

Ex 7:11, Is 44:25

Magicians (ποιηταὶ ἀριστοτεχόνες): Ex 4:1, 4:2, 1 Sam 6:2, 15 47, 12, Jer 27:9

19. Ex 7:11-12, 22, 8:3, 14.

20. Actual at least in the mind of the narrator, as in the case of Daniel.

21. Such compositions were of course also made of other ANE gods.

22. Ex 5:1ff

23. Gen 41:16, Dan 2:28


Ex 33:33, Dt 18:22.
Chapter IV - Balaam's Magical Techniques

I. Proofs from the Bible
1. Jos 13:22
2. Dt 23:5-6 and Jos 24:9-10
3. Balaq Called Balaam Because of His Fame
4. The Financial Reward Promised to Balaam
5. 22:40 (Proverbs 29:26)
6. 23:1-5 (Altars and Sacrifices) and 24:1

II. Proofs from Extra-Biblical Sources (mainly Daiches' material)
1. Hiring a Diviner to Curse One's Enemy Before a Battle
2. Incubation
3. Particulars of the Offering of Sacrifices
   1. Building Altars and Offering Sacrifices
   2. The Importance of the Place to be Chosen
   3. The Sacrifices Were to be Offered in the Early Morning, before sunrise.
   4. The Number of Altars and Sacrifices
   5. The Sacrifices Were Brought by Both the Diviner and His Client.
   6. After Offering Sacrifices, the Client Had to Stay with Them, While the Diviner Did His Work.
   7. The "going" of the Diviner.
4. Balaam's Words and Actions Before the (first) Divination Proper (23:3)
   1.
   2.
   3.
5. The Second Attempt and the Preparation for the Third
   1. The Second Attempt
   2. 23:15
   3. The Diviner Had to Address the Client
   4. The Importance of the Third Attempt
6. Balaam's Change of Mind Before the Third Attempt
7. Astrological Implications of 24:17
8. The Alleged Similarity of Balaam's Techniques to Those of a Shaman

III. Conclusions
CHAPTER IV - BALAAM’S MAGICAL TECHNIQUES

I. Proofs from the Bible

1. Jos. 13:22

Surprisingly enough, there are very few direct expressions in the text of the Bible itself which characterise Balaam as a magician (qosem). He is nowhere expressly called thus in Nu 22:2-24, nor elsewhere in the Pentateuch; only Jos 13:22, which repeats Nu 31:8, adds "haqqōṣem" to the name of Balaam son of Beor, probably by and for a later generation for which the mentioning of this designation was to conjure up the incidents connected with his name and personality.

2. Dt 23:5-6 and Jos 24:9-10

But there are no less strong indirect proofs that B. was regarded as a magician: Dt 23:5-6 and Jos 24:9-10, rather curiously relate that Y. had to intervene for Israel (Jos 24:9, similarly Dt) – the only permissible conclusion being that otherwise B. would have been able to lay effectively a curse upon them! Then the only possible explanation is that the power of B. as a magician must have been regarded very weighty indeed by the Pentateuch itself! Therefore B’s ability for effectively laying a curse upon the people must have been well known and much feared.

3. Balaq (Balak) called Balaam Because of his Fame.

Here the second proof presents itself from the B.F.: Balaq would never have called B. if he had not believed in his efficacious power to prevent Israel from occupying the country next to Moab by cursing Israel. This also explains why Balaq went to such length to summon B. from a far-away country (there are about 400 miles from P’tor to Moab), and to pay an accordingly high fee for his services. There were doubtlessly enough magicians of all kinds available in Canaan (Dt 18:9-11), and the conditions in Moab, Ammon and Moab were probably not very different; so Balaq must have had reasons of his own to insist on the coming of B. It must have been B’s singular status and renown which made him such an attractive choice of Balaq.
4. The financial reward promised to Balaam

It has often been argued that the financial reward which B. was promised cannot be held against him, as also a prophet like Samuel was offered a payment for his service (1Sam 9); besides, a long travel and a long absence from his home had certainly to be paid for. The gist of this argument is that one cannot prove from the payment B. was to receive that he acted as a magician and not as a prophet.

Now as to Samuel, he was offered a customary gift but not a payment for his service (Note: if his answer can be called a 'service' at all). In the B.P. the whole point is that the payment is promised only under the condition of a successful execution of the request, as clearly proved by 24:10-13: as B. was unable to fulfill this condition, he had to leave Balaq empty-handed. So it still looks that Balaq treated here B. like a professional magician or diviner, who would, as the custom was, be paid for his service.

From 23:23, no direct proof can be obtained as to the use of magical techniques by B.

5. 22:40 (on next page)

6. 23:1–5 (Altars and Sacrifices) and 24:1

B., before trying to obtain an oracle for the third time, did not as at the first two times, without going here into any exegetical details, the general meaning of this difficult phrase, must be that B. realized the futility of a third attempt after two failures because of his previous approach. Moreover, the phrase very clearly refers back to 23:3–5 and 15–16, esp. to (23:5). The first two attempts are called which means that in them, but not in the two latter ones, B. acted like a or , like a magician.
As will be shown, this result is corroborated by important external evidence. 4

5. 22:40 מָכַּה יַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּשְׁפָּט הַמַּעֲשֵׂה הַמִּשְׁפָּט מֵאֱלֹהִים

In 22:40 it is told that Balaq arrived with B. at Qiryat Husot, where both of them stayed before beginning their common undertaking. There Balaq either "slaughtered" or "sacrificed" cattle and sheep. As to the second half of the verse, there are two possible explanations:

1. מָכַּה יַעֲשֵׂה is short for the formal common meal 8 which was possibly a rite of commensality whereby the B., the seer and B. his employer could be embraced within a common communion so that B's god would also work for the latter. מָכַּה יַעֲשֵׂה means that Balaq dismissed B. and his princes after the meal formally. The מָכַּה is used as an accusative, a typically Aramaic usage, rare in Hebrew prose, as in 2:20:0.3:30: יִכְּלֹא יָד (cf. 32:20).

2. No common formal meal took place. Balaq sent to B. and his princes portions of meat of these animals; the direct object is to be implied. The difficult word remains then מָכַּה in the pi'el, not in the qal which might be expected; does the pi'el reflect Old Aramaic usage? Cf. Neh 8:12 מִכְּלֹא יָד (Gray 339). 9 One might expect, however, that B. would be Balaq's guest. 10

It seems to us that the first explanation is to be preferred, as they had a plan before them which could be achieved, as will be shown, only by close personal cooperation, a common meal was deemed necessary to strengthen their ties for their common purpose (apart from the customary reception meal which would not be mentioned especially by the narrative).

6. מְכַּה יַעֲשֵׂה and מְכִּים יַעֲשֵׂה (24:3, 4 (15,16))

The difficulties are these:

1. מְכִּים יַעֲשֵׂה appears nowhere else in the Bible. מְכִּים can mean (a) to open, as in Aramaic (see dictionaries of Levy and Jastrow);
(b) to close, in which case one has to read \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \); \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) is found in Thtr 28 only; but is more frequent in Bible, later Hebrew and Aramaic, with the usual change from "c to "o. 

(c) reading \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) (Wellhausen, Comp.). i.e. whose eye is perfect." As to (a), 'Aramaic' roots are frequently found in Hebrew poetry; the meaning would be similar to or the same as \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) of V.7, and refer then to a spiritual or prophetic meaning. This meaning seems to underlie \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) and also LXX; \( \text{אֶלֶתִּינוֹס} \), which r. Rashi. The idea is that E became 'seeing' after having been blind so far to the revelations of Y. As to (b), it would involve a deviation of the Masoretic reading. It would mean: whose bodily eye is closed, contrary to \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) of V.7, and refer then to a spiritual or prophetic version. As to (c), there is an ArM parallel that "the month of the bărû has to be (ritually) clean", but nothing is said there about the eye(s). Moreover, in classical Hebrew the expression would be \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \); the major difficulty presents the "c. If it is a relative pronoun, then one has to read \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \). However, \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) and \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) are nowhere else found together in the Bible.

Therefore for purely grammatical reasons, as well as keeping in mind the great reliability of ArM and the Masoretic vocalization, it seems that (a) is the relatively best explanation. (For an additional reason, see below); but it is certainly not final.

2. \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) is difficult; it may refer to a pathological condition of a clairvoyant whose eyes are staring open, neither seeing nor perceiving the physical world around him, but 'seeing' with his 'inner eye' a vision, "fallen down under the overpowering influence of the divine spirit" (Gray 362); the other two views quoted by him, are not very convincing. As to \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \)

\( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) in 22:31 and \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) and \( \text{י"ע נ ש"כ י נ ש"כ} \) remains difficult, and Gray's criticism that 1S19:24 does not explain our verse, is right.
Now if we can be excused with may it be that these two expressions are indicative of a magical technique of B. to obtain a vision? This argument would tend to strengthen that of Daiches who maintains that these two expressions must refer to the haru's ability to see well the omen.

All that can be said here is that because of the extreme uncertainties of safe interpretations for both expressions, one has to be very cautious to draw any conclusions as to pathological conditions or magical techniques of B. from these two expressions only; there are no others. For the sake of the argument, however, let us accept that B. actually wanted to express just that. But what is the context in which these two expressions appear? As shown, 24:1-2 must refer to a basic change of attitude taking place in Balaam, his conversion to be from now on a conscious spokesman of Y, contrary to the first two times. Then these two expressions would have been appropriate there, but not here. There would be no point to stress an abnormal psychic condition of a clairvoyant, and certainly not the obtaining of a vision by magical means, if Balaam wanted to strengthen his reputation of being a great prophet. Moreover, both phrases occur within the framework of another sentence which, as has been shown, was a (standard) formula for a prophetic speech (cf. 2 S 23:1-2). One may doubt whether B's outward appearance during the pronunciation of an oracle - actually prophecy - 3 and 4 would be in any way different from that of 1 and 2.

Therefore our conclusion is exactly contrary to the hypothetical assumption put forward. According to the context, it seems safe to conclude that these phrases reflect the changes within B's personality, and are probably typical of prophetic impression or activity, and are also most probably to be explained from Old Aramaic (from Hebrew alone, a satisfactory explanation cannot be given); and allude to
that which the prophet is given to see and understand. It would refer then to the third and fourth (oracle) prophecy.

2. **Proofs from Extra-Biblical Sources**

(Mainly from the magical rites of the Babylonian bārū – the article of Daiches)

Most of the relevant material can be conveniently found in an article published in 1909 by S. Daiches, who tried to prove that B was a Babylonian bārū, and acted like one. Daiches stated the problem correctly and gives a definite answer to it (60): "Was B a prophet or merely a sorcerer? I think there is evidence which goes to prove that B was a sorcerer pure and simple. This evidence comes from cuneiform inscriptions". Daiches' observations are mostly based on H. Zimmern's "Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Babylonischen Religion", Leipzig 1901 (=BBR).

The detailed proofs given by Daiches are these:

(1) **Hiring a diviner to curse one's enemy before a battle.**

It can be shown that it was an ANE custom that a king would have a diviner before a battle to ascertain the will of the gods on the spot, as e.g. whether to fight the enemy or not. It may be assumed – but there is no actual proof – that the bārū would also lay a spell, or curse, the enemy before the battle. Actual proofs in our opinion, exist only for the cases under (b); it is permissible, to infer that the custom was older and originally goes back to the ANE. The following cases are known:

a) **Babylonian and Assyrian material**

1) From the Mari texts: according to several texts from Mari, a bārū-priest was attached to each army contingent (cf. Archives royales de Mari, II, (cpud ANET 1:482) (No. 22; III, no. 80)

2) From the legend of the King of Kutha, Daiches 63-64, 69=Zimmern BBR 83.
3) Assurnasirpal (883-59 BC) tells in an Annal Inscription (III 20) how he caught the barû who travelled before an Aramaic army which he defeated - EBr 83.

b) Arabian material:

1) Josephus, Antiquities XIV 2:1, quoted by Gray 328: a case of using the service of a diviner by the Arabs before a battle; during the 1st century BCE.

2) Goldziher, in his Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie, I 1-121, tells about the custom of the hija among pre-Muhammedan Arabs, quoted by Gray 328: "Goldziher has brought together much evidence that serves to illustrate the power attributed to Balaam, and the part which he was asked by Balaq to play..... The value of the hija rested on the fact that it was originally a magical formula. The independent existence of such a solemnly uttered speech or curse was very materially conceived." "The hija, however, was said by poets." 

Th. Gaster, Thespis^2 153-5, commenting the Ugaritic poem of Anath III AB,B adduces many cases of exchange of curses or taunts which was the regular preliminary of all combats in the ANE, including Ritual Combat.

Altogether the material is frequent enough (Mari, Babylonia, Assyria, Aram, Moab, pre-Muhammedan Arabia) to warrant the assumption that the laying of a curse by magical means to weaken an enemy's power was a common ancient Semitic custom.

((2)) Incubation

Because of 22:8 (כָּלִי כָּלִי מֵעָיִן) and 22:19 (כָּלִי כָּלִי מֵעָיִן) it has been maintained that B. used the technique of incubation to obtain an answer by an oracle of Y. The custom of incubation was common in the ANE but also in the Greco-Roman world. The basic idea is that the will of a god would be revealed especially in dreams or night-visions obtained at sacred places; as proofs from the Bible, Gen 28, 1 Sam 3, 1 K 3 and 9 are adduced. A proper preparation by means
of ritual cleanliness, prayers, fast, etc. would help to achieve a divine vision or revelation, especially at sacred places. A god could thus be made to respond to human entreaties, so that incubation, like prayer, could be used as a magical means to elicit an answer from a god. However, it cannot be proved in any of the above-mentioned cases that incubation was actually practised in ancient Israel. The reason B. told the messengers of Balaq to wait for Y's answer until the next morning can be explained that B. was accustomed to revelations at night from Y, probably in dreams, although the word 'dream' is not mentioned. In this case B. was probably sure to receive an answer from Y. because the well-being of his people Israel was involved.

((3)) Particulars of the Offering of the Sacrifices

(1) Building of altars and offering of sacrifices

These two were a necessary part of the ceremony for the bārū. Daiches 61; cf Nu 23:1 ff. As to its intention, there cannot be any doubt that they were offered to the gods (mainly to Šamaš) in order to propitiate them to give a favorable decision; the answer asked for. That the building of the altars was not spontaneous but a part of a ritual can also be recognized from the repetition: "B. said to Balaq: Build me here seven altars etc." at 23:29, like 23:1, although it was Balaq who insisted upon the third attempt: 23:27-28.

(2) The sacrifices were to be offered in the early morning, before sunrise. Daiches 61; cf Nu 22:41.

(2) The importance of the place to be chosen

The choice of the proper place for the divination of the baru was of great importance: Daiches 63, cf Nu 22:41. It was called "the place of decision of the divination"-āṣar purāsse bārūti- BBR 38 l. 6, also "the place of judgement"-āṣer dīnī - BBR 104 l. 18.
Another point, not mentioned by Daiches, which must nevertheless have been of great importance, is that the diviner must be able to see the enemy with his own eyes; of 22:41, 23:13 and 23:28; similarly 24:2. Otherwise B. could have cursed them from his domicile without making the long and costly journey. The suggestion that B. curse them from P'tor is nowhere even mentioned.

(4) The number of altars and sacrifices

In 23:1, Balaq erects 7 altars and sacrificed 1 bullock and 1 ram on each of them. Daiches 62 quotes an instance where an ašipu had to erect 7 altars and to sacrifice 7 lambs; however, other numbers (3, 8) are mentioned as well in the ritual.24

(5) The sacrifices are brought by both the diviner and his client.

Daiches 62; cf 23:26. The sacrifice is offered in such a way that the diviner does the actual offering and the other holds the lamb, so that the sacrifice was indeed brought by both. Daiches already pointed out that the suggested emendations of 23:21 are wrong, and that the text is definitely right.

(6) After the offering of the sacrifices the client has to stay with them, while the diviner does his work.

Daiches 62&63; cf 23:3.

(7) The 'going' of the diviner - מַלְכַּה

The next part of the ritual is seen by Daiches 63-64 in the word מַלְכַּה מַלְכַּה 23:31, to which he attaches a magical meaning from a Babylonian text. It is possible that Daiches is right here too, but it seems that מַלְכַּה is short for the 'דָּאָה יָמָה' at the end of the verse, which most
probably does have a magical meaning (see below). It may be pointed out that the Akkad. *matalilku* can be used for a man receiving a divine revelation: (Ref.)

but this still can be used for *spl*.

((4)) Balaam's Words and Actions before the Divination Proper

Balaam's words: 

This phrase is rather difficult. Daiches 64-65:

"The expression *yap* is used by B. for a good reason. God does not appear to B. in a vision (as to a prophet). *He* will depend upon the success of B's magical manipulations, whether God will appear to him and tell him what he likes to hear.

This appearing of God by means of magical performance is expressed by the Niphal of *yap*. God's appearing or non-appearing is merely accidental. It depends upon the result of his magic. In the Babylonian divination it depended upon the result of the liver-omena or oil-omena. When they were favorable, then the gods appeared to the bārū."

Daiches' explanation, stressing the magical meaning of the phrase, is much to be preferred to that of most moderns, who arrive at theirs: "... perhaps God will grant me a manifestation" (new JPSV; similarly others) by means of Targum Onkelos: *yap* without apparently noticing that T.O., as usually in such cases, resorts to a paraphrastic sentence so as to avoid a straightforward translation of the direct contact between Y. and man.

But is it really a faithful rendering of the original Hebrew? Both words of the phrase *yap* are derived from the same root *gap* to meet, to chance, to happen to; Arabic *bā* to walk from place to place. (Ges.) Its niph'al *yap* means passively: to be met (as in 23:15), also reflexively: to happen to be at a place of German: sich befinden (23:16: *yap*)."
then; to meet; in Ex 5:3; to appear, of a god (when spoken to Pharaoh) can mean: to meet a god beside the altar, like in the present situation.

is the inf. f., having become a preposition, meaning: towards, either in a favorable sense (Ex 3:18, see Cassuto's expl. ad loc.; Nu 11:34, 18:17 A.S.) or in an adverse sense (Nu 20:20, 18:17:48, Nu 22:34).

is a hapax legomenon: to come towards, a verb with p'okh is used for man about (pre-meeting himself?) to meet Y.: Ex 19:12, Am 4:12, 30.

Now Balaam says to Balaq: 1111c"o 'o c'.' "It seems to mean here more than simple "perhaps", almost expressing a wish: May Y. reveal himself, come towards me, meet me", probably a fixed formula meaning that "the gods (here: Y.) may grant me a favorable oracle". (Daiches 65).

What does this expression mean against the wider background of the narrative? What B. wants above all is of course the permission to curse Israel in the name of Y., which is the 'favorable decision', the oracle he would like to be granted. Therefore the meaning must be here this: "Were it that Y. would agree with me", or in other words, "May his will agree with mine", which means in the present context in fact, "May his will yield to my will!" - a typically 'magical' expression: the will of the god is subservient to the diviner's will, the magician's will, and, finally, the god has thus become a servant of the magician. That this 'magical' meaning is the correct explanation is proved by 24:1: 33 alludes doubtlessly to the first and second attempt of B. to obtain permission to curse, is another phrase for finally repeats 'the p'... c", affirming its magical meaning, as stated above.
In our opinion, these three verses - 23:3,15 and 24:7 (and perhaps 23:23) are key verses of the B.P. They prove beyond doubt B's magical techniques and thus reveal his essentially magical approach to Y. Then the altars and sacrifices also assume their proper meaning: they are offered not so much in honor of Y., notwithstanding the demands of the ritual, but literally as a bribe to induce him to acquiesce to B's cursing Israel (23:4). From this result, far-reaching insights into the character of Balaam can be obtained, important for the understanding of the whole narrative.  

(2) Balaam continues: דַּעְתֵּךְ "God was to show him through his (B's) omen. A clear divinatory expression. Bārū means the "seer" and "bārūtū" the "seeing" of the omen."

It may be remarked that this expression is apparently not used by Biblical prophets who, in a similar situation, would say: בֵּאָרֵי "as B. did himself in 22:8. It is perhaps the difference between the respective techniques of the bārū and the Biblical prophet. Syntactically the nearest parallel is 1821:4; Mic.6: Is 34:6."

For the difficult see GK 130d, 137c, Bergstrasser p. 265 f.

(3) The end of the verse: בַּעֲרוֹן

This is again a singular sentence, actually a hapax legomenon. Whatever it means - for the different translations, explanations and emendations see Gray 344, Greenstone 253 - Daiches 65 states: "(It) no doubt means this: that B. now performed his divination ceremonies, looked at his omen and awaited the decision of God." Then Daiches makes the very reasonable suggestion "that only these two words
were chosen to signify all the magical work in order not to
describe in the Bible in detail actual sorcery."

However, of all the suggestions made the most inter-
esting is the one that B. went limping. According to Th.
Gaster's suggestion, in late Hebrew means to drag the foot
along", which may imply magical walking, which would make good
sense in this context.

(5) The Second Attempt and the Preparations for the Third

(1) The second attempt

After the first attempt failed, a second was made: that
is again in keeping with the Babylonian ritual for the bārū.
If the divination did not succeed at one place, another, a
more favorable one, would be chosen. The right choice was
essential for the success of the divination: Daiches 63,
Gray 349, Greenstone 257, 261.38

(2) Daiches 67 explains ingeniously that B. shows Balaq thus to
stand by his sacrifice, and thus he (Balaam) would try to
get his decision that time. As the Babylonian ritual is often
interspersed with remarks what the bārū should do before or
after saying this or that, this explanation seems plausible
Even if ה does is taken as "here", it could still be explained
as a part of the magical ritual. Once again, every particular
within the magical ritual is deemed of major importance, and
One slip may destroy the value of the whole procedure.

(3) The Diviner must address his Client

Another feature of the magical ritual is that the bārū
must address the man for whom he divines while he divines;

O. one.
so does B. addressing Balaq by his name—23:18: Daiches 67. However, then the first oracle should contain such an address as well; but it does not. With some difficulty, 23:7—in the third person—might be understood that way.39

(4) The importance of the third attempt

After the second attempt has failed as well, Balaq and B. try for the third time! Daiches 67-8: "The number 3 indeed played a great role in the Babylonian magic....So Balaq would not give up before he tried a third time." 23:27-28. Interestingly enough, it is always Balaq who is pushing B.; the latter seems to be quite reluctant to continue: 23:13, 27.40 For the reasons see

(6) Balaam's Change of Mind before the Third Attempt

After the preparations for the third attempt were completed (23:29-30), B. suddenly changes his mind. The reason given for B's decision to discontinue the third attempt is this: 24:1 Daiches 68-69 quotes here the following parallels: "Although B. now utters prophecies, he knows that in reality he is a bārū. His titles, which are almost identical with the titles of the Babylonian bārū, show this...."The wise man, the knower, who keeps the mysteries of the gods." 23

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It seems to us, however, that the change coming over B. as expressed in 24:1 and 2 indicates a true change of mind, a realization of his futility to continue acting against the express wish of Y., as told to him and by him in the first, and even more so, in the second oracle. Otherwise the continuation would not be understood. Moreover, the statement that B. utters prophecies knowing that he is in reality a bārū is true for the first and second oracle, where, as shown, B. was forced to utter words (actually prophecies) contrary to his avowed aims. But this was certainly not the case after his mind changed, and he decided to do that which Y. required him to do. Therefore, Y's immediate reaction is פְּרָעַד נַחֲלַק (with ב), This is definitely not something which a man is able to 'call down' upon himself, but it has to be given to him— at least in the view of the Bible. Therefore Daiches' statement here— as to 24:3 ff— is self-contradictory. Moreover, Daiches did not see the obvious and very close parallel of 24:3-4 to 28:23:1-2:

This speech of David, until v7 there, is recognized as a divinely inspired utterance; therefore the parallel gives to B's words the authority of a truly inspired speech, especially after פְּרָעַד נַחֲלַק (in David's words— ב נחֲלַק).

Again, there is a basic difference between the bārū who "knows and keeps the mysteries of the gods", and the prophet who never boasts of knowing divine mysteries, whose task is not to keep secret anything he is told by Y., but to announce it to whomever he is sent. פְּרָעַד נַחֲלַק means that B. wishes to announce now, Y's words and not his own. Contrary to the first and second oracle, he now con-
sciously identifies himself with Y's intentions and of course wants his audience to know about it. Contrary to the first and second oracle where B. had to bless against his will. The same holds good for the other expressions of his prophetical consciousness in 24:3-4, which are in fact an extension of (probably meaning: with/of an open eye) and (to which 23:31 should be compared: ) here-like there-it is B's feeling as if he had groped in the dark so far, but that suddenly light had come upon him - the knowledge and realization that he must carry out just that which Y. had wished him to do all the time. This sudden revelation causes him to announce openly his new-won prophetic stakes. This inner transformation must have been for B. a tremendous experience, which every true conversion and new-won conviction always is.

Finally, "B. the son of B'or" has many parallels in prophetic literature, 23:23 being the most obvious one, which, as already shown, was a cliche favored in the utterances which claimed to be inspired. It stands to reason that both prophecy and Babylonian divination, dealing with the revelation of matters visions divine seem by man, to be told to his fellow-man, must share a common vocabulary to a certain extent, just as the vocabulary of 'true' and 'false' prophets was indistinguishable to the ordinary man of the people. Therefore, much caution is necessary to differentiate between B. the Babylonian bārū and B. the non-Israelite prophet of Y.
For these reasons we cannot accept Daiches' interpretation of the parallels to 24:2-4, 15-16; on the contrary, these passages appear to us to indicate a precise distinction between the mantic processes of a bārū and the inspiration of a prophet.
8. The Alleged Similarity of Balaam's Techniques to those of a Shaman.

1/ The attempt has been made to explain prophecy by comparing and equating it with certain other similar phenomena known from the history and phenomenology of religions. Thus, it has been maintained that Biblical prophets and shamans have certain common features in their techniques(s) of ecstasy, that might throw some light on the difficult and complex phenomenon of prophecy.

2/ According to M. Eliade, **"the shaman is an individual who succeeds in having mystical experiences ... (it) is expressed in the shaman's trance, real or feigned. The shaman is pre-eminently an ecstatic."** He undertakes ecstatic journeys to meet the God of Heaven face to face and bring him an offering from the community ... also to add to his knowledge by frequenting higher beings. **"The shaman learns ... to orient himself in the unknown regions which he enters during his ecstasy... He is forewarned of the obstacles that he will meet on his journeys, and knows how to overcome them... All this he learned during his training in solitude or under the guidance of the master shamans."** The shaman is able, possessing the power of a spirit, to foretell the future. His mystical journeys include "an ascent to Heaven to obtain consecration from the God of Heaven."

3/ As far as Biblical prophecy is concerned, there are two possible similarities: the ecstatic trait, the 'raving', of the shaman may be compared to the 'enthusiastic' behavior of some prophets, particularly at the period of likely Canaanite
influence on Israelite prophecy. But the trait as such is rather often found in the phenomenonology and history of religion; moreover, as already shown, it was not characteristic of Israelite prophecy and was later suppressed.

The other similar trait is that the prophets sometimes speak about their taking part in a divine council (Isaiah, Amos, Jeremiah) in particular cases (Abraham, Moses) even being permitted to intervene and plead for the people (Abraham, Moses). Their task is to transmit, whatever is revealed to them, to the knowledge of the people. Even the performing of miracles is in the Israelite prophetic tradition ascribed mainly to Moses, Elijah and Elisha, none of them belonging to the 'enthusiastic' type of prophets. The Biblical prophet performs miracles because he is sent to do so by his god.

4/ Shamanism and Israelite prophecy have then this in common:

a. The ecstatic state of mind - in Israelite prophecy at least during the time of Samuel.

b. Both the shaman and the prophet have suprasensory experiences which they attribute to a divine agency.

c. They transmit their experiences to their communities.

On the other hand, their main differences are:

a. The prophet, unlike the shaman, is not a mystic.

b. The shaman, unlike the prophet, has no 'compelling message' to announce. He is interested to obtain secret, heavenly knowledge for the benefit of his community. The prophet, however, feels himself a messenger of his god sent to his people. Thus the shaman is much more alike to the bārū or to the ecstatical mahhū in his social function.
5/ On the other hand, in the history of Jewish mysticism there is a phenomenon which to a large degree corresponds to that of the ecstatic mystic: the קהל צורים. Almost everything quoted from Eliade in the second paragraph applies to these Jewish mystics.
III. Conclusions

The proofs for the use of magical techniques by B. are impressive because both the Biblical and the external evidence lead to the same conclusions. In Nu 22-23 B. acted like a typical bārū, which of course was realized by the Israelites, for which the clearest proof is 24:1 and therefore 23:3, 16 but also 23:23, stating the difference between prophecy and divination as between Israel and other peoples. Because of their affinity, however, a clear distinction must be made between these two phenomena: 24:1-2 is the borderline between B. the prophet trying to act like a bārū, and B. the conscious and enthusiastic prophet. Therefore, the evidence that he acted like a bārū obviously reflects only a part, although an essential one, of the rather complex phenomenon of B; for a full understanding, the question has to be asked how far he acted like a prophet.
Notes to: Chapter IV

1. See also, *p. 1 part 1 para. 5*

2. Gray 329 *a. o.*

3. See because of the two possible interpretations of 2: if it means "in," not "against," it proves nothing for our point. See Nuy 355, allright, Aricles 215 R. 49

4. See this chapter, II # 4 and 6

5. Probably referring to the magical techniques performed by Balaam, see *p. 1 part 1*

6. It is remarkable that the Jew Med. comm. already arrived at the same results. Cf. Ibn Ezra to 23:3, Rashi, Ibn Ezra and Ramban to 24:1. They had only the vocalized W text before them (and to which does not go beyond the M text) which they explained to the best of their ability.

7. In Hebrew, Phoen. and Old Aram., in Ugaritic an Aramaic, and *divinatory,* all have the two meanings of "to slaughter" and "to sacrifice." Which of them is the more original one can be left open here. (Originally any slaughtering of an animal for consumption may have been regarded as a sacrifice to a god; for the Bible, cf. Lev. 17. If this is right, then the original meaning was "to slaughter for a sacrifice."
Notes to: Chapter IV (cont’d)

14. See this chapter, part \( \frac{1}{2} \), para 6.

15. See ch. 5 para 7


17. The first proof - hiring a diviner etc. - was already dealt with before him.

18. May it be assumed that Balaam went with the Midianite army as a bārū when the Israelites made war on them (cf Nu 31:8 and Jos 13:22)?

19. Additional material on the hīgā to be found in Ibn Hisham 641:15.

20. A distinction should however be drawn between taunts and curses proper. In our case, it is certainly the curse of Balaam which is to weaken the power of Israel by its magical potency. The change from the blessings to the (hypothetical) curses does not necessarily contain a taunt; a curse might however be uttered in form of a taunt.

21. Thespis 331; Furlani, Gudea of Lagash: Witzel
Notes to: Chapter IV (cont'd)

21,22. Thespis 331, where additional bibliography can be found; see also M. Kmosko, Eine uralte Besiedelung der Inkubation: ZA 29, 158-71.

23. Likewise, Kmosko 171: "Man beruft sich auch auf das At und findet darin verschiedene Spuren dieses Gebrauches. Dahingegen findet man aber dort keine Inkubationsriten, sondern einfache Theophanien überliefert sind, so ist jeder Vergleich mit der klassischen Inkubation ausgeschlossen."

24. As to the importance of the number 7 in a magic ritual, it is well known; it attains on each of which a bullock and a ram are sacrificed are mentioned in Job 42:6.

25. Likewise the English version (as quoted in Gray): "perhaps (soi) God will fall in with me." RSV translator: "perhaps the LORD will come to meet me; ..." The magical interpretation is brought out very well by Buber-Rosenzweig in their translation: "... gar wohl mag ten sich ER mir zur Fügung" (literally: it may well be that Y. may submit himself to my submission). The ancient versions are not very helpful. LXX paraphrases: έι μοι φανείται o' theos εν sumantesει.

Notes to: Chapter IV (cont'd)

27. See M. Hoefner and N. Rhodokanakis, Wiener Zeitschrift für Gesicht zur Kunde des Morgenlandes, 1936, 218 n. 1. - This reference I owe to Dr. T.H. Gaster.

28. Perhaps equivalent to יִלּוֹהּ Ex 5:3, or יִלּוֹהּ 111, which is used for Y.'s revelation, as in Ex 19:9, 20:20, 24.

30. Cf. The poem of Yehuda Halevi:

31. In late Hebrew: (Gesenius):

32. In German, "jemandem entgegenkommen" can mean "to go towards someone," but has also the secondary/derived meaning of: to co-operate with some, or: to make a concession to someone, to comply with someone, to accede. It seems that this double meaning underlies the Hebrew phrase here.

33. The right explanation of 24:1 is already found with Rashbi:
Notes to: Chapter IV (cont'd)

34. Already in Midrash Rabba (=Yelamdenu) to this verse:

This point has been entirely misunderstood by Kaufman, "Toldot ioc. 463 and 496.

35. See ch. 9 part 7.

36. The most interesting amendment suggested by the Talmudic remark (see Grenstone 253) that Balaam limped. Similarly the Talmudic saying bi, Rosh Hashana 16b, Baba Mesia 75 b may well reflect older Babylonian magical practices and customs, underlying popular beliefs.

37. The magical meaning is secured by 24:1

38. It has then to be understood; Similarly the Talmudic saying bi, Rosh Hashana 16b, Baba Mesia 75 b may well reflect older Babylonian magical practices and customs, underlying popular beliefs.

39. In our opinion, Balaam's utterances are to be understood as prophecies. Any prophetic utterance is always spoken to someone, and must therefore have a definite address. But it is not necessary that every prophetic speech should be prefixed by the names(s) of the people spoken to.
Notes to: Chapter IV (cont'd)

40. So already in Midrash Rabba to 22:41:

41. See ch. 9 part 6.

42. סוד in biblical Hebrew means council; the meaning of secret (noun), secrecy is post-biblical.


45. For particulars of Shamanic ascension rites, see also M. Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, Meridian Books M 155, Cleveland and New York, 1963, pp. 105-6.

46. See ch. 2.

47. Cf. e.g. L K 18:39

Notes to: Chapter IV (cont'd)

61. Albright, Oracles 231 n. 141.

62. [Handwritten note: the controversial - I can to be taken as "in".]

63. To assume two different sources because of this contrast is a total misunderstanding of the intention of the narrative, missing its whole point.
Contents of Chapter 5: Balaam's Role as a Prophet

1. Statement of the Problem  
2. Balaam's Dependence upon Y.  
3. The Terms Used to Describe the Talks between Balaam and Y.  
4. The Terms Used to Describe Balaam Uttering his Oracles  
5. The Source of the Utterances of Balaam  
6. The Contents of the Oracles  
7. The Literary Form and Devices of the Oracles  
8. Conclusions
Chapter V: Balaam's Role as a Prophet

1. Statement of the Problem

Reading through the Balaam Pericope, one cannot help to be impressed by Balaam speaking and acting like a prophet; his oracles appear not to be essentially different from similar utterances of other prophets. Therefore one of the main issues is whether Balaam can be regarded as a prophet or not. There are at least several strong arguments for the view, that Balaam behaved and acted like an Biblical prophet. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the mature of these arguments.

2. Balaam's Dependence upon Y.

Balaam has to ask permission from Y. to accept Balaq's invitation (22:8-19); once he has been permitted to go, it is only under the condition to do and speak only what Y. will tell him (22:20). The point is that Balaam himself says so (22:8,13,18-19), and then repeats willy-nilly this statement several times. That he is clearly conscious of his position is best illustrated by 22:18b:

which means: because of Y., he cannot do anything against
his will. This is certainly a revealing statement: Balaam himself tells Balaq's messengers that he is under restraint in this matter and not free to act as he would like to. Balaam's admission of his dependence upon Y. is of course weighty evidence; it is even the key to the 'Leitmotif' of the whole narrative.

An interesting difference — and, as will be shown later, a decisive one — is that Y. generally sends a prophet to carry out a certain mission, whereas here Balaam asks for permission to go for a certain purpose, which he is refused at first; it is only when he asks for it again that he is allowed to go — under certain definite conditions (22:20).

3. The Terms Used to Describe the Talks Between Balaam and Y.

The talks between Balaam and Y. are described in terms typical of communication between prophets and Y.

Balaam himself says (22:8):
this is confirmed by the narrator (22:9-12):

Similar or identical expressions are found in Gen 15 (although the dialogue takes place there within a vision - 15:7; דַּבָּא אָם), Gen 17 (prefaced by רָאָשׁ הַיְנוּ), see also there v. 22) Ex 3-4 (Moses), Ju 6 (Gideon), 1K3 (Solomon). Likewise Y. appears at night - most probably in a dream - to several prophets, but also to some other people: Gen 20:3 (Abimelekh), 28:12, 31:10 (Jacob), 31:24 (Labah), 1K3:6 (Solomon); the experience as such is vividly described in Job 4:12-16. Some commentators felt that a divine revelation to Balaam in a dream is no evidence of a high degree of his prophecy. However, according to Nu 12:6-8 (יִנָּב מִלָּה לְגוֹ הָא צָרִי מִלָּה לְגוֹ הָא צָרִי), Y. would reveal himself to prophets by dreams, apart from other modes of revelation; Moses occupying a special position among them. Therefore Y's revelation to B. at night, probably in a dream, would fall within the range of what was then regarded a 'normal' prophetic experience.

As to Balaam's talk with the Malakh Y. in 22:22-25, see ch.

where the rather complex problems of that paragraph are dealt with. Suffice it to state here that such messengers appeared either to prophets: Abraham (Gen 18,22), Jacob (Gen 32:2-3) Gideon (Ju 6), or to people to whom Y. wants to speak, mostly give them a command in connection with, or for the sake of, the people who are under his special protection, or have a special relationship with him: Hagar (Gen. 16), Samson's parents (Ju 13).

As it can be argued that Y. is here concerned with the protection of Israel, Balaam would be on par with Abimelekh and Laban; the proof from this argument is therefore inconclusive.
4. The Terms Used to Describe Balaam Uttering his Oracles.

(3) The terms describing the utterance of Balaam’s oracles and the changes coming over him before commencing them, are of typical prophetic usage.

a) In 23:5, the utterance of the first oracle is preceded by שֵׁם הַמִּסְרָא שֶׁמֶר פִּים. The expression is found in 2:S14:19: מָכַר בָּעָלָה שֶׁמֶר פִּים exactly obviously meaning that Joab told the woman what to say to David.

In Ex 4:15-16, the same expression is applied to Aaron who must speak exactly (to the people, to Pharaoh) that which Moses tells him. This absolute dependency of Aaron, who must not speak words of his own when speaking on behalf of Moses, is again stressed in Ex 7:1-2. Therefore in our passage the meaning of this peculiar expression is that Y. told B., even forced him, to say exactly, without any change, what he wanted him to say — 23:16 before the second oracle repeats 23:5; as will be shown, the situations are identical.

b) At the beginning of the third and fourth oracle B. himself describes the changes coming over him, some of them in language somewhat obscure: 24:3-4, then repeated (with only some addition) in 24:15-16. Verse 3 (and 15) has an almost exact parallel in 2:S23:1-2:

**Nu 24:3:**

**Lev 23:1**

**Nu 24:4(15)**

**2:S23:2**
The almost identical opening formula must have been a standardized, fixed introduction — of course only one of many — to inspired or prophetical speech: it so happens that of this one only two instances are found in the Bible, and possibly a third.

c) The formula $\text{P}^\dagger\text{J}^\dagger\text{P}^\dagger\text{J}^\dagger$ (24:2) is quite common in prophetical writings and has several variations. It has to be stressed that $\text{P}^\dagger$ is never used for a so-called 'false' prophet in the Bible. The expressions $\text{P}^\dagger\text{J}^\dagger\text{P}^\dagger\text{J}^\dagger$ (24:3, 15, 4, 16), depending however on their interpretation, most probably indicate the mental state of an ecstatic prophet who is having a vision.

To sum up, the terms describing Balaam pronouncing his oracles are those applied only to so-called 'false' prophets.

5. The Source of the Utterances of Balaam

Balaam pronounces all his oracles in the name of Y.

This is self-evident from the contents of the oracles, especially from the first three. Moreover, when B. tries to obtain an oracle favorable to his intentions, he is forced to announce publicly in his first, then again in his second, oracle that he cannot curse Israel against Y's will — 23:8:

23:19-20 is even more explicit:

It is essentially the same statement which Balaam made to Balaq's messengers before going with them (22:18), and he has to make it once again after the unsuccessful end of his mission (24:13); no false prophet would ever have made a statement to this effect.

It is equally evident that Balaq expects B. to pronounce Y's words as shown by 23:17:

and 23:27:

and finally by the taunting remark in 24:11:
The failure of B to fulfill Balaq's wish constitutes the best proof of the truthfulness of B's statements.

6. The Contents of the Oracles

The oracles are prophecies, according to their contents.

They describe the singular relationship between Y. and Israel, his people; they bless the people of Israel in various ways; they glorify its present military might, and its recent victories over its enemies. This might allude to their just completed crushing victories over the formidable Amorites at their conquest of Transjordan. But all this does not yet make the oracles prophecies.

The decisive proof consists of the address to history, of the historical interpretation given in the oracles: the present (the immediate future) is explained according to the long-range plan of Y., concerning Israel and its neighbors, including its past as well as its future, and Y's plan which will be realized in the course of history. The first and basic fact is the unique relationship between Y. and Israel (23:9b), built upon the righteousness of the people (23:21a) who regard Y. as their King (23:21b, 24:7b). Against this strong bond between the powerful god (23:22a) and his people, whom he makes strong by his might in their fight with their enemies (23:24, 24:8b, 9a), no machinations can prevail. The address is, of course, to Balaq and Moabites who know very well that the Israelites were on their way from Egypt to Canaan. The second and the third oracle tell about Y. who brought Israel out of Egypt, followed by the mentioning of its military might owing to Y. The topical allusion is quite clear: The Moabites will not be able to interfere with the military might of the Israelites, and from now on they will have a very powerful neighbor at their border. Interestingly enough, the possibility of an Israelite attack on Moab is not even mentioned, which is in agreement with what is told in Nu 21:10-15 and Dt 2, but also
Nu 22:5-6, that Israel did not attack\footnote{Nu 22:6} had no intention of attacking Moab on its way to Canaan. When, in the fourth oracle an Israelite victory is predicted, it is to be in some far-away, time, in some future generation, \footnote{Is 14:4, Mi 2:14, Hab 2:16.}

The literary Form and Devices of the Oracles

Each of Balaam's four oracles (23:7, 23:18, 24:3, 24:15; 24:20, 21 and 23 to be added within or after the fourth oracle) is pre-faced by the words \footnote{Is 14:4, Mi 2:14, Hab 2:16.} The same expression is used by some of the classical prophets: Is 14:4, Mi 2:14, Hab 2:16; but, of course, not exclusively by them. They are written in the typical form of ancient Hebrew poetry, and as such, together with Jacob's Blessing, the Song of the Sea, the Song of Moses and Moses' Blessing, the Song of Deborah and several psalms, constitute the oldest parts of Biblical poetry, whose close affinities to Ugaritic poetry are well known. The same can be expected here, especially since Balaam himself came from Pethor-Pitru, situated at the Euphrates, not very far away from Ugarith.

Literary devices used in prophetical literature are also employed here. First of all the masal (mashal) is to be mentioned, having \textit{masa} here the particular meaning of a "taunt" (Spottlied, Hohnlied), as used by the classical prophets: Nu 27:27, Is 14:4, Hab 2:6, are the closest parallels, the latter two containing the full expression \footnote{Is 14:4, Mi 2:14, Hab 2:16.} they are taunting songs whose main feature is strong irony.

It was Balaam's great endeavor and common objective of Balaq and Balaam to curse Israel, so strongly sought by the former and so avidly by the latter. However, as it was sought
against the express wish of Y., well known particularly to Balaam from the beginning, and in the course of events also to Balaq, their great and prolonged effort achieved exactly its opposite: by the will of Y., the intended curses became blessings expressed in so many superlatives. There the belief of the ANE has to be taken in to account that neither a curse, nor a blessing, once pronounced, could later be revoked or removed. This holds good in the Bible, especially when it was spoken in the name of Y. concerning Israel.

Now this failure of Balaq and Balaam is very clearly brought out in the meghalim. Balaam has to bless Israel against his will, not only once, but even twice; it is only at the third and fourth time that he consciously acts and speaks like a prophet, which does not yet prove that he actually is a prophet. Each labor mashal is stronger in its blessing, and thus in its irony. Another moment of irony is this: the military might of Israel, who defeated and crushed the Amorites, who had formerly defeated the Moabites and taken away their original territory, must have been particularly galling to the latter whose territory was now occupied and settled by the Israelites: Nu 21:25-29, 32:34-38 (all Moabite names!), and finally Nu 11:26, which makes its historicity very plausible. The effect is supreme at the fourth mashal, when Balaq is told that Israel will defeat and rule Moab as well as its allies in the future.

It can actually be shown that each blessing is an answer to an intended curse; the blessings (as well as the curses) being typical of the philosophy of life (Weltanschauung) of the ANE.

A list of curses of calamities on which might befall a man or a people would include the following: there is no difference
A list of \textit{curse} or calamities which might befall a man or a people would include the following; there is no difference between a man, a tribe or a nation, (no detailed proofs have to be given here):

1. \textit{The} shall have no name, which is equivalent to: he shall not live. The name is a life-index.
2. The man's family shall decrease; he shall have no seed-sons. (Likewise his fields and his animals, being his subsistence, shall not prosper.)
3. The place or the land where he lives shall be cursed. Man lives upon the land which gives him life. Cursing a dwelling-place is then equivalent to cursing a person living on it.
4. Cursing a man by the name of his god, or degrading, or even outright cursing a god: degrading him by pointing out his weakness, particularly his inability to protect his worshippers, his temples, and his country in which he is worshipped.
5. Other nation(s) will defeat the people.
6. The people will be sold into slavery.
7. The nation, its king, and its god(s) (i.e., their statues, idols) will be carried away by their victorious enemies.
8. Cursing a man because of his evil deeds, so that (his) god may punish him for them. \textsuperscript{16}

\textit{prophecies (oracles)}

Now the four \textit{mesa\-ha\-lim} show very clearly the following:

1. The names Jacob and Israel are mentioned in everyone of them, altogether eight times.
2. Their large number is mentioned (in the 1st and 3rd \textit{mesha\-nal}).
3. Their dwelling places are praised in the 3rd \textit{mesha\-nal}.
4. The people is given its strength by the might of \textit{Y}, their god, which is supreme: 2nd, 3rd, and 4th \textit{mesha\-nal}.
5. Israel has defeated and will defeat its enemies; 2nd, 3rd, and fourth messianic prophecy.

6. Y. has set Israel free from slavery (this is the meaning of 1 Cor 15:20): 2nd, 3rd, and fourth messianic prophecy.

7. The conquest of Transjordan by Israel with the help of Y., their god; the imminent conquest of Canaan is perhaps implied: 2nd and 3rd messianic prophecy.

8. The relationship, the bond, between Israel and Y. is based upon the righteousness of Israel: first and 2nd messianic prophecy.

A comparison with Is 14 shows that 17 is a taunt full of biting irony against a human being who believes that he is a god and therefore does not owe a moral responsibility to any other nations, not even to his own people: Is 14:6,17;19-21. He will be punished by retribution, "measure by measure": his future generation will suffer because of him; he himself, who sought god-like honors in his lifetime, will be dishonoured in his death. Hab 2 promises retribution to a nation whose conquests were achieved by hardship, cruelty, and terrible sufferings of subjugated peoples. The irony of the situation is that the retribution will be meted out exactly according to the crimes committed: Hab 2:8, 10,16,18-19. As to the irony of the Nu 21:27-29, see above.
To sum up, the contents, form and literary devices of the oracles of Balaam are certainly those of prophetic utterances, as they are cast in the literary form of the mashal, and all four of them are full of irony. This, however, does not yet make them prophetic utterances, as this mode of expression can be found also elsewhere, e.g. among the mashalim, as in Nu 21:27. It is likewise found in the most popular narrative as well as wisdom literature. As a matter of course, the taunt was no invention of prophetic literature, but this literary genre was taken over by the prophets and used whenever it suited their purpose.

3. Conclusions

Our question was whether it can be shown from the Balaam Narrative that Balaam was a prophet, or whether he is described in terms applied to prophets. This question was investigated from six aspects.

1. Balaam's dependence on Y;
2. The terms describing the talks between Balaam and Y;
3. The terms describing Balaam uttering his oracles;
4. The source of the utterances of Balaam;
5. The contents of the oracles;
6. The literary form and devices of the oracles.

From (2) and from (6) only, isolated from the broader context of the question, it cannot be conclusively shown that Balaam must have been a prophet. On the other hand, (1), (3), (4), and (5) are, in our opinion, conclusive proofs; especially the address to history (5), which is essentially a prophecy about Israel and Moab, is the most convincing proof. Altogether,
the cumulative evidence is decisive. It is unimaginable that a "false" prophet would have made any such statements as Balaam did about his dependence on Y. or would have produced any prophecies like those of Balaam; from the "false" prophets opposing Micaiah and, at a later date, Jeremiah, an oracle satisfying Balaam would doubtlessly have come forth at once. But then (2) as well as (6) contribute to the fulness of the argument by completing the picture. There is absolutely nothing in these two that militates against our conclusion that Balaam was a prophet.

The final conclusion is that Balaam is described in terms of a Biblical prophet, but not only in them. [The so-called "Oracles of Balaam" should therefore be called "Prophecies of Balaam".]
Notes to: Chapter 5

1. See ch. 6, para 3

2. See ch. 6, para 3

3. See ch. 9, part 3

4. See ch. 2

5. See ch. 9, parts

6. A third instance is Jer 23:31: to be translated: ... "and they spoke like prophets: "The word of N son of N..." (THG) as a later textual emendation of the Rabbis so as to avoid this expression in a speech imitating these 'false' prophets, who actually used it (Jer 28:4).

7. See ch. 4, part 1, para 7 is never used for a so-called 'false' prophet in the Bible.

8. See ch. 4, part 1

9. This of course can already be seen from 22:5-6, but is not expressly stated there.

10. See ch. 2
Notes to: Chapter 5 (cont'd)

11. The intention is of course to a later time, like Gen 49:1 and Dt. 4:30. Later, these expressions were understood to contain Messianic prophecies. Cf. the Targumim, likewise the various Midrashim to these verses.

12. The most important contribution here is Albright, Oracles JBL 63 (1944), pp. 207-33. For the first oracles, cf. S. Gewirtz, Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel, Chicago, 1963, pp. 48-71. There still remains the question whether Balaam's language was Aramaic or Canaanite. However, the farther one goes back to ancient Aramaic and ancient Hebrew, the more these two coalesce. Perhaps these four oracles of Balaam may be regarded as earliest Hebraized specimens of ancient Aramaic poetry. That their vocalization, at least, was Hebraized, is to be taken for granted.


14. As to other literary devices, see ch.

15. See ch. 9, part 2, para 5 for the exact position of the title in relation to blessings and curses.

16. This list is of course not complete. For additional material see Lev. 26, Dt. 28, and especially the Book of Job.
17. The same applies to Balaq, for which the fourth oracle should be compared. See ch. 9 part 4.

18. Is it a coincidence that all these cases involve a transgression of what seems to have been ANE international law or at least usage?

19. and as such not different from prophecies against nations; cf. Amos:1, Joel 4:1-8, Obada.

20. The so-called "Oracles of B." should therefore be called "Prophecies of Balaam".
Sixth Chapter: Balaam as a Prophet and Mantic Combined

1. The Arguments against the Hypothesis of Two Separate Narratives

2. The Human Problem: Can a Prophet Become a Diviner?

3. The Basic Concept of the Balaam Narrative: Balaam's Temptation by Y.
1. The Arguments against the Hypothesis of Two Separate Narratives.

So far it has been shown that Balaam acted like a typical bārū, but likewise that he behaved like a prophet (ch. 5). A solution to this obvious difficulty is the assumption that the Balaam Narrative in its present form is a composition of two originally different stories about a prophet and a magician, which were at a later date compiled and edited as one story. According to some commentators, up to 5 separate sources can be shown to have existed prior to their compilation into the present text.

This hypothesis is possible, though highly improbable.

The arguments against it are as follows:

a. It is maintained that the compilation was executed in such a way that each of the original stories can still be recognized to a large extent. A detailed comparison of the two supposed original stories with each other and with the present narrative shows that such fragmentation destroys the point of the narrative when read as a unity.

b. This hypothesis needs the scaffolding of several arbitrary assumptions, concerning the composition of the present text. This is especially true of the distinction between E. and E.

c. In the present narrative, prophecy and magic are so closely interwoven in one person that their separation is almost impossible. Modern commentators, however, seem to overlook this essential point. In addition, each of them arrives at different, often contradictory results.
quently, these attempts must be judged as unsuccessful. The existence of two separate, meaningful narratives about a prophet and a magician prior to the present narrative, in spite of honest, detailed and ingenious efforts, cannot be said to have been proved.

d. The distinction between the narratives of J and E should correspond between the role of Balaam as a diviner and as a prophet respectively, but in point of fact, it does not. Again, unwarranted textual emendations and additional hypothesis as to the original two texts and the redactor's - or redactors' - work have to be enlisted to make this assumption plausible.

e. If, for the sake of the argument, there did originally exist two narratives, the logical outcome of each is no longer discernible, and what on the assumption of unity can be readily recognized as a logical sequence becomes a meaningless transition.

f. Moreover, the story about the ass would have to be taken out of the narrative as well because of the supposed incompatibility of verses 22 and 20 of ch. 22. Then the oracles would have to be assigned to two different sources apart from J and E, so that some commentators have arrived at no less than five different sources. This tends to strain the credibility of even modern readers to a very large extent.

If, as these commentators assume, the compiler and the subsequent redactors were so clumsy as to leave tell-tale evidence of their editorial botching, an incredible strain would have been placed on the credulity of their readers.
g. As likewise claimed, the narrative must have undergone a lengthy process of oral tradition before it was written down in its present form. But a progressive ironing out of inconsistencies would have taken place in such a case.

However, the hypothesis advanced by these scholars cannot be refuted only by such negative criticism, but requires the substitution of a more plausible exegesis.

2. The Human - Religious Problem: Can a Prophet Become A Diviner?

Here we arrive at a rather complex part of our investigation: the possible and sometimes logically impossible, but nevertheless existent contradictions in man's mind, the ramifications of his thoughts, feelings and aspirations.

The question is: can a man brought up as a diviner ever become a believer in a personal god making ethical demands on his followers, like Y.? This is, of course, possible, but highly improbable. He who is a diviner deep in his soul will very rarely be able to renounce the very foundations of his beliefs. He who believed that he kept the secrets of his gods by his own divinatory techniques would have to become a humble servant of an omnipotent god; he would psychologically not be easily reconciled to the thought that he is absolutely dependent on a god.

Now the opposite possibility should be considered. Can a prophet, a man upon whom, as he feels, Y. has bestowed his divine spirit, the gift of prophecy - can such a man become a diviner? Are not inspiration and divination contradictory, even mutually exclusive concepts? In the sphere of abstract
thought, they certainly are. But man's mind is not always entirely logical, and emotions and ambitions may play a part no less important than his thinking. What was the position of a prophet in his community? Because of his function to announce Y.'s words, his status must have been of great importance. Thinking of prophets, one should not confine one's associations to the sufferings of a Jeremiah only. A prophet might hold a superior position among his people who would come to him to hear from him the word of Y. Thus he might easily become a powerful and influential person by virtue of his being a spokesman of Y., the god of Israel, like Samuel at his time. But a prophet was always a mediator, a living symbol of the omnipotence of another power; never did he possess any independent power of his own. The paradox of his position was the he derived all his importance and influence from faithfully carrying out orders of another. It was never his own word which was sought after, but always that of his god. Moreover, the prophet had often to announce messages which were very much disliked by his audiences - which, he felt, reflected on his position. In such a predicament, he could not help comparing his own situation to that of a magician, who, in a way, fulfilled the same function as an intermediary between the gods, and the people. A magician was never in such a situation; he was never at a loss to announce the will of his gods in such a way as to make it always compatible with what the king, or anybody else, liked to hear. Besides, because of this most diviners were rich and influential personalities whose powers were clearly in no way limited by their gods. The prophet would
ask then himself if he could not make himself independent of
his god either by passing him or by assuming at least a par-
tial control of his god's potency. After all, he, the prophet,
always knew the unraveling of the future, having gained his
god's confidence. Could he not convince him to let him an-
nounce — of course, in Y.'s name — that which he, the prophet,
would prefer?

Thus the true prophet has already become potentially a
ture magician, without having ceased, to remain, at least
officially, a prophet of Y. in the eyes of the people.

Within his society in which there was a strong undercurrent
of superstition, belief in divination and the potency of magic,
it is more than probable that a prophet sometimes entertained
such thoughts. But then the whole character of Balaam be-
comes at once fully intelligible, and the key issue which dom-
inates the whole narrative becomes clear. It enables us to
look at the hidden recesses and ramifications of B's thou-
th. Thus the B. Narrative has gained an entirely new dimension,
has become of utmost significance for the relationship be-
tween revelation and divination in the ANE, as viewed by a
writer of the prophetic school.

It is exactly this ambiguous relationship between the
prophet and his god which reveals how easily a prophet could
come a magician. The classic expression in the Bible of
this conflict, which many a prophet must have felt, is the
Balaam Narrative. It is the only case known from the Bible
of the ANE, where two such conflicting characteristics/faculties,
religious phenomena, revelation as well as divination, coexist
in one man, originally a prophet, who attempts to change prophecy into magic. This is the basic explanation of the Balaam Narrative.
The Basic Concept of the Balaam Narrative: Balaam's Temptation by Y.

The idea which solves the difficulties of the different divine names as well as most of the other problems involved in the Balaam Narrative is contained in one thought which permeates the whole pericope and makes it one closely-knit unit: Y. tempts and proves Balaam, the prophet and rosem, whose position is an intermediate one between prophecy and magic. It can be shown that the whole narrative is built upon this single assumption.

The subject is introduced by Balaam himself in his first answer to the first delegation of Balak (22:8):

When mentioned by Balaam first, it sounds very elementary, almost commonplace, a matter of course. The many and various repetitions however, show clearly that this apparently very simple demand became problematical for Balaam. During the development of the events following it, he is to arrive anew at the realization of the importance of this demand and its execution, as stated in this sentence.
The subject of the narrative is then Y's demand to have his words faithfully conveyed by his prophet. Y. chooses a man for any definite purpose to announce his words. The question which then arises is of course this: What will be the reaction of the man chosen to be a prophet, a speaker of the divine word? Will he then be ready to speak Y's word under any conditions and circumstances, and Y's word only and nothing else?

Instantly one is reminded of the reactions of an Isaiah and a Jeremiah, when chosen first for this task, as well as of certain later situations in their lives; but also of that of Moses, to mention just a few very different attitudes. According to the Bible, a prophet is regarded not only as a 'mechanical' instrument to be used by Y. against his will, but the potential prophet remains always a human being, with all his volitions and desires, strength and weaknesses; even possessing the power of refusing the task demanded of him. 

He is therefore able not to go to his appointed place and not to speak Y's word, which the Book of Jonah shows. More than that: The potential prophet is even in a position to disavow Y's words. On the other hand, a man who was never chosen at all to be a prophet, can pretend to be one, uttering words which Y. had never told him at all, like to so-called "false" prophets during the time of Jeremiah.

The result is liable to be even more serious is such a man has already become known as Y's prophet. Now the reasons of such a reaction of a prophet may be those of any human weakness. With Balaam, as clearly stated in the narrative, the reason is very simple: his strong desire to obtain the money and honor offered to him.
The question which arises instantly, at the very beginning of the narrative (after the seventh verse, in 22:8) is then this: Will Balaam act according to Y's will and speak his word as his true prophet - even if he does not receive the remuneration and honor, which would be due to him if he carried out Balak's demand?

The potential prophet then is able to refuse the prophetic task assigned to him; but this is not yet the end of the story. After all, as the Bible abundantly shows, Y. has ways and means of his own to convince a man, much more so a prophet, of the necessity of his mission. Y. may achieve this directly, by commanding the potential prophet to speak certain words at a certain place and time, or, indirectly, by actions and events, so as to influence the prophet and to convince him of the necessity to carry out the mission entrusted to him. However, in exceptional cases, if all these means of persuasion should fail, Y. will normally entrust his message to someone else. For particular reasons, to be discussed later, in the case of Balaam, Y. will force the prophet to speak the divine word by taking from him his freedom of speech, and will then "put his own word into the prophet's mouth." 20

Several of the prophets initially refused to accept the mission assigned to them, or were unwilling later, as established prophets, to carry out a specific task. Sometimes, situations were created in which they complained about the hard fate and suffering which was theirs when carrying out Y's mission. This is the background of Jeremia's complaints,
especially in chapters 12, 15, 20. Likewise Moses found himself very often in difficult situations in which he turned to Y., complaining and asking for help. Y's reaction to the prophets was this: He listened to them, answered their complaints, and tried to persuade them to fulfill nevertheless his task; the final goal of the mission was never abandoned; sometimes another prophet had to be chosen to take over and carry out a still incomplete mission. These dialogues between the prophets and Y. their God are of utmost importance for the understanding of the essence of Biblical prophecy, because it is by them that the relationship between them and their God is brought out most clearly. The prophetic mission and its execution are, in fact, the only subjects of these dialogues.

Now the interesting feature of the Balaam Narrative is the conspicuous absence of any true dialogue in it. Balaam does not address himself to Y., not even once, in spite of the fact that from the very beginning he is in a difficult situation, which he at once realizes. He prefers to have his own way, and as it is opposed to Y's will, he tries to make Y. conform to his own will. Thus a real dialogue between Balaam and Y. is just impossible. This, in the last resort, is the reason that Y. does not try to convince Balaam at all by words, but reacts exactly as might be expected to Balaam's efforts: "Measure for measure." He shows him that his attempts to impose his will upon Y. are simply ridiculous. (The supreme effect is reached here by the introduction of the "speaking ass") The different reactions of Y. as well as Balaam, are then to be understood along these lines.
The "human situation of the prophet" having been outlined, Balaam's 'personal problem' can now be defined. He has only two ways before him— but tries to choose a third. He can either accept or refuse the offer made to him by Balaq. However, he wants to induce Y. to agree with him, by actually trying, by devious means, to somehow obtain his final permission. In the seven aforementioned verses, the struggling of Balaam with his personal problem of his is clearly revealed, and thus the whole narrative becomes one continuous dramatic struggle between his prophetic mission and the offer of much money which proves very attractive to him; it is a struggle of his position between his two "masters", between Y. and his ministers, and between Balaq and his ministers.
Notes to: Chapter 6

1. For a more detailed treatment of the assumption of separate sources and the reasons leading to it, see ch. 7 para. 1-5; for the development of this hypothesis since Wellhausen, see ch. 8.

2. The arguments presented here are of a general nature and apply equally to all the variations of the hypothesis put forward. As our interpretation is based on entirely different assumptions, I can therefore dispense with a detailed discussion with each of the variations of the source theory about the Balaam Prophecy; besides a detailed discussion would enlarge this composition out of all proportions.

3. Besides, the distinctions between J and E, which were once believed to be very marked, have become less pronounced in the opinion of many commentators. Cf. e.g. W.P. Albright (in: Introduction to: H. Gunkel, The Legends of Genesis, Schocken Books, New York, 1964, p. IX) who states that he and M. Noth have independently argued that J and E are so closely related that E can be considered only as a secondary recension of J, and that the narratives of P are in a large part - though by no means entirely - later forms of JE.

4. Cf. especially the interpretations advanced by Gressmann, Nowinckel, Rudolph and Eissfeldt and the interminable hair-splitting discussions among them.
Notes to: Chapter 6 (cont'd)

5. As emendations of the Hebrew text are arbitrarily made, there finally remains almost no common ground of discussion.

6. It is indeed admitted that if there originally existed two separate narratives, important parts of each of them have not been preserved in the present narrative.

7. See ch. 7 para 3, and ch. 9 part 4.

8. See ch. 7 para 4, and ch. 9 part 5.

9. Then the final result would have been a narrative either about a righteous and faithful prophet or about an evil and avaricious diviner, but certainly not a narrative containing elements of both.

10. This point will be fully elaborated in the 9th chapter.

11. Compare I S 3:17, 1 Kings 22:13-14, Ex 4:28-30; in Jeremiah 42:4, where the prophet's reliability seems to have been questioned by the people, Jeremiah says:

12. The variations among them will be dealt with in chapter 9. This very essential problem of Balaam has very rarely been recognized as such, and therefore most interpretations have not been able to explain the development of the plot. As will
be shown, the older traditional commentaries are here by no means superior to the more modern ones, in spite of the fact that their general position - the assumption of one story about an avaricious Balaam - is a much better starting point to arrive at such a conclusion. The best traditional commentary is that found in the Yelamdenu (Tanach), and taken over from there by the Bamidbar Rabba.

13. The importance of this sentence, seven times repeated has eluded all the commentators, as far as I can see.

14. The refusal of several prophets is more readily understood if the full weight of this sentence is borne in mind.

15. Which is certainly a didactical composition for a school of prophets. Its main point, brought out at the end of the narrative, is that the prophet has been finally persuaded of the importance and necessity of his task.

16. This is clearly implied in Nu 22:5-6, 16-17. Therefore any additional introducing of Balaam was not considered necessary by the narrator.

17. The "rehabilitation" of Balaam, as attempted by Gray 318-9, together with his shift of emphasis of the main point of the story, are unacceptable, because none of the difficulties of the narrative can be reasonably explained by his assumptions. On 22:7 he comments (p. 329) that it was customary for a seer or prophet to obtain a fee, like Samuel and Ahija.
Notes to: Chapter 6 (cont'd)

But these small presents (1 S 9:8,1 K 14:3) can in no way be compared to a fee demanded and agreed upon; moreover, from 22:17-18, 37, 24:11, 13 it is clear that the fee would only be paid if the aim, namely the cursing of the people in Y.'s name, were achieved. As Balaam had sent for someone so famous who lived far away, the sum involved must have been quite large, even if the Hebrew expression is, of course, not to be taken literally. At a later time, the same practice was condemned by the prophets: Micha 3:5,11 is an outstanding example. Nor holds Gray's comparison of the respective sums and services rendered. Samuel was not "offered 1/4 shekel to tell an individual about lost asses", but this small sum was considered as a customary gift of respect and deference to a revered person; See 1 Sam 12:3-5. The other cases quoted by Gray point to the same conclusion. - Therefore one of the main arguments of Gray as to the unblemished character of Balaam cannot be upheld. For additional proofs of Balaam's avarice see chapter 9.

18. The classical definition is found in Jeremiah 1:7b.

19. Cf. 1 Kings 19:16: the transfer of Elija's task to Elisha.

20. The only case mentioned in the OT is actually Balaam: Nu 23:5 and 16. For the reason, see ch. 9.

21. Cf. 1 Sam 16:2
Notes to: Chapter 6 (cont'd)


23. See ch. 2

24. Only thus the repeated attempts of Balaam to curse Israel can be understood, after he had expressly been told at the first dialogue that he must not do it. As a 'primitive element' is contained in the Balaam Narrative, it is introduced just by the man (Balaam) who should know better. It is, in a way, prophecy at its worst.

25. A fact entirely overlooked by Gressmann, who however recognized the primitive moment. But the way he explains it does not do justice to the text. See ch. 9, part 5

26. See ch. 9 part 5.
CHAPTER 7: MAJOR PROBLEMS OF THE BALAAM NARRATIVE

1. The Unity of the Balaam Narrative.

2. The Compilation of the Balaam Narrative by E and J.


4. The Differences Between the First Two and the Last Two Oracles.

5. The Use of Different Divine Names.

6. The Problems of Textual Criticism.

7. The Historical Background of the Parables.

8. The Problem of Connexion with the Baal Peor Incident (Nu 25).


10. The Balaam Narrative within the Book of Numbers, and the Pentateuch.

11. The Date of the Composition of the Balaam Pericope.
Chapter I: The Problems of the Balaam Narrative

The main exegetical problems of the Balaam Narrative, Nu 22:2-24, excluding geographical problems, are eleven.

1. The Unity of the Balaam Narrative

Most modern critics, since Wellhausen, divide the Balaam Pericope into two parts assigned to E and J, according to the occurrence of the two divine names underlying these sources. As to the exact assignment to each of these sources, their views vary to a large degree. The complexity becomes even greater when a lengthy historical development is taken into account. Anyway, the final form in which the story is now found in the OT, is supposed by most to be an older story of J, overworked and enlarged by E, and brought into its final form by their compiler and/or redactor. The signs of their work are believed to be still clearly distinguishable. Other critics point out that the highly poetical parables and the prose narrative must be ascribed to two different literary and therefore historical periods. Some think that the poetical part is the older, but the opposite view is held too, that the narrative kemei is older. The view of the essential unity of the whole narrative, including the parables, has almost entirely been given up.
2. The Compilation of the Balaam Narrative

by E and J

As both the divine names Elohim and Y-hwh (apart from several more) appear in the pericope, it is thought to be composed of E and J, found also elsewhere in the Pentateuch. This is the position held by most commentators. Thus two actually different stories of Balaam are obtained. This trend is strengthened by the contradictions in B's character, which also favoured the assumption of the original existence of two different stories.

Once this position is taken, the question then arises what belongs to each of the two sources—which is not easy at all to decide because of the different readings of M and LXX and Sam as to the divine names. The next step is then to compile two different original stories from the narrative in its present form. Then the contents and the point of each story has to be determined, and a plausible reason for the combination of the two stories has to be given. All this seems at first quite easy, but proves quite a task and presents many difficulties of major kind; apart from the fact that almost each commentator arrives at different conclusions.
It is generally believed that this story had not originally belonged to the Balaam Story altogether, but was inserted later for a reason which cannot be recognized now any more. It might, however, have contained another story about Balaam—about which nothing else is known—and was, therefore, included into the present text. As the interpolation was not done carefully by the compiler, it is thought to be easily recognizable, especially as (1.) the contradiction between 2222 and 2220 was left as it originally stood. Also, (2.) the Angel of Y appears only here and nowhere else in the Balaam Narrative. Last, (3.) the Angel of Y and the speaking ass are believed to belong to a more popular, even primitive stage of religion, being incompatible in this respect with the other parts of the narrative. To sum up, it is the accepted view that 2222-35a cannot originally have been an integral part of the Balaam Story.
The Differences between the First Two and the Last Two Parables

This difference is very marked and may be summed up thus: Before each of the first two parables, seven altars were built and sacrifices brought on them; then there took place what may be called a "meeting" between Balaam and Y., at the end of which Y "put a speech into Balaam's mouth".

For a preparation for the third parable--which is followed almost immediately by the fourth--there are again altars and sacrifices, but the "meeting" does not take place. Instead of it, the "divine spirit" comes over Balaam. Then the third and fourth parable contain prophetic introductions, in the same highly poetical style as the parables themselves. These are absent in the first two parables.

Most critics find additional differences between the contents of the first two and the last two parables.
5. The Use of Different Divine Names

It might be difficult to find in the Pentateuch any other pericope containing one narrative which contains so many different divine names. There are so fewer than six:

\[ \text{to which may be added:} \]

The situation becomes even more complex when one and the same person uses different divine names in his speeches, and when different divine names are used in relation to the same person by the narrator.

There exists of course the possibility that the use of various divine names is accidental or indiscriminate, or simply a stylistic means. These possibilities will, of course, be discussed later; if they can be ruled out, it seems to us that the solution of this problem according to functional principles should prove one of the keys to the understanding of the Balaam Narrative.
6. The Problems of Textual Criticism

In the Balaam Pericope, the more important differences between the M text as compared with the LXX and the Sam. are as to divine names; the Syriac corresponds exactly in this respect with M. This, of course, raises the question of the reliability of each of these texts and versions.

There are two possible ways out of this dilemma: The one is to apply generally accepted rules of textual criticism as to the greater reliability of one text against the others, or to reach a decision by majority of versions, etc. The other way is to find out if the change in a version might have been caused by the necessity to translate a difficult text, taking into account the well-known rule that there is no translating without interpreting.

In this pericope, better results are obtained by the second method; this point will be worked out later in full.
The Historical Background of the Parables

This is one of the most controversial points. The most different periods have been suggested: a time as early as that of Moses, taking the parables at their face value as prophecies; and then down to post-exilic times, regarding the contents of the parables as depicting the Messianic age. Most commentaries, however, agree that they fit best into the period of the early monarchy, as the feeling expressed in them is one of natural strength and military success.

The date of the writing down of the narratives would naturally coincide with the dates of the sources (E and J) to which they belong, whatever these dates may be.

The question then is how far the original historical background has been preserved, and if the original story changed by oral and/or written transmission, or any other influences.
The Problem of Connexion of the Balaam Narrative
with the Baal Peor Incident in Shittim (Nu 25)

The report of the whole story of Balaam is decisively affected by the relation of the Baal Peor incident to the Balaam Narrative. If the Baal Peor incident is regarded as a continuation of the Balaam Narrative, Balaam must be supposed to have been the real, even if unnamed, originator of the event which took place there. He would then appear in a very favourable light. But, if there is no connexion between these two stories, the final evaluation of B's character will be entirely different. The Pentateuch itself does connect these two narratives explicitly (in Nu 25/15-16). But this is not accepted as genuine by most commentators or believed to be of much later date than that of the two narratives, and therefore considered irrelevant to the appreciation of Balaam's character. On the other hand, curiously enough, all the later accounts of the B. N. contain a decidedly negative character sketch of Balaam: Nu 25/1-15, Dt 23:5-6, Jos 13:22 24:9-10, Mi 6:5, Neh 13:17.

This question will be taken up in a later chapter.
Contradictions in the Character of Balaam:
Prophet and Qosem

This is doubtlessly one of the most difficult problems of the interpretation of the whole narrative. Balaam appears as a prophet speaking Y's words, and the divine spirit comes upon him (before the third parable). The fact that Balaam called Balaam can only be explained on the assumption that Balaam was believed to be able to curse (execrate) in the name of Y., and that any other execration would have been useless against Israel, whose God was Y.

On the other hand, however, Balaam appears as a qosem (magician, sorcerer). This is not only a later view, as in Jos. 13:22, but can conclusively be shown from the text of the narrative itself. Some of Balaam's doings suggest very strongly similar practices of a Babylonian "bānu".

These contradictions caused most modern commentators to adopt the view that originally there had been two different stories, one about a prophet, the other about a qosem. A later compiler is supposed to have edited them in such a way that the contradictions remained essentially in the present form of the narrative.

The older view is that these extreme character traits, those of an OT prophet and a Babylonian magician and sorcerer, are nevertheless compatible with each other in one and the same person, and such an assumption will not make impossible demands on our conceptions of human nature. This view, however, has mostly been given up today.
Whichever view is held as to the historicity of the Balaam Story, there remains still the question why it was included in the Book of Numbers, even in the Pentateuch at all. If the semblance of historicity demanded its inclusion, the connexion with the Book of Numbers seems to be still very loose. All the events recorded in the Story take place outside the Israelite camp.

About other possible connexions there is much guesswork and speculation, but unfortunately very little sound material. Most of the views brought forward seem to lack the moment of necessity and thus carry little conviction.

Any answer to this question is of course entirely dependent on the final interpretation of the Balaam Story.

No interpretation of the Balaam Story, however, can be regarded complete and final if it does not account for a necessary and essential connexion between it and the Pentateuch as a whole. The fact that these events happened outside Israel, prior to their conquest of the Land of Canaan, is just not good enough to explain their incorporation into the frame work of the Pentateuch.
Any new attempt of interpretation of the Balaam Story has to take into account these two basically different views, and decide between them. Adoption of either of them will affect decisively the interpretation of the whole narrative.
The Date of Composition of the Balaam Pericope

This problem, too, cannot be solved by itself, as its solution depends on the answers given to several of the other questions raised: the historical background of the parables, and the suggested compilation of the narrative by J and E. The compilator may then be identical with that of the combined JIE narrative. It may be remarked in passing that the view that the differences between E and J are far smaller than hitherto thought has gained much preponderance lately.

On the other hand, if the Balaam story can be shown to be essentially monolithic, of one piece, it must be far more ancient than hitherto admitted, at least in its original form. Albright has shown that the parables may be very well compositions of the tenth century, and perhaps even older. Then the narrative - at least in its original form - cannot have been composed later. This assumption would coincide with another view expressed by Albright that Balaam's practices resemble closely those of a 13th century Babylonian bar. This would give a clue to the earliest possible composition, but would, of course, not yet solve the problem of the present text of the narrative. There is still to be taken into account the probability of changes during the process of either oral and/or written transmission of the text until its final redaction.
As his last question cannot be answered with any certainty at the present state of OT research, no attempt will be made within this study to go beyond the historicity and date(s) of composition of the Balaam Story. The larger problems of Pentateuchal criticism cannot be dealt with in this study.

To sum up, it seems that the question of interpretation is the basic one. Once the essential meaning of the narrative is established, it should be possible to arrive at more or less final answers for most of the questions raised.
Notes to Chapter 1

1. For the summary of Wellhausen's position see in the historical Survey #1. "Der Segen Bileams Num. 22-24 st zwar rein aus J\*E\*x, aber darum doch kein Werk einheitlicher Conception." (p. 109).

2. See. ch. 1 #2.

3. This is the view elaborated at length in Mowinckel's article, based on his concept of oral tradition, and discussed in most articles written after his.

4. To Wellhausen, Gray, Gressmann, Mowinckel, Eisfeldt. - The redactor may or may not be identical with \(E\)-Rudolph's view, which does not recognize any Exodus, has generally been accepted not. See Albright, from Stone Age to Christianity, Doubleday Anchor Books, New York 1957, p. 250.

4a. To already Wellhausen; those after him enlarged much on this point.

5. Von Gall, Zusammensetzung und Herkunft der Bileam-Perikope, 1900. Mowinckel p. 244. - Here a confusing variety of different views prevents. No two commentators seem to be able to agree at this point. The question, of course, is again which parts of the narrative and/or the parables belong to \(J\), \(E\) and/or the subsequent redactor(s). For a detailed discussion see chapters 1. M. Buber, Moses, Oxford and London 1946, assumes that the first two parables, but especially 2323abd, are the oldest part around with a story was built, and that all the rest is later addition (p. 169). Mowinckel holds here an intermediate position.
(see note 16 of this chapter).

6. This had been the position of all the ancient and medieval commentators, and is still held by some modern ones, as S. R. Hirsch, H. Herm and others. The deficiencies and general inadequacy of the traditional view will be discussed below, see ch.

7. It works out like this: 22 - apart from verses 22-35 which are assigned to J - is to be divided between J and E; 23, including the first two parables, to E; 24, including the last two parables, to J. This is the view of Gray and Mowinckel; Gressmann’s view is not quite clear, see Mowinckel p. 242, assigns 23 to J, implying that 24 belongs to E, and assumes the final redactor to have been J.

8. See ch. 1 #9.

9. Rudolph, p. 106, assigns J to J only (following up a hint already found in Wellhausen p.111), Kuenen and Steuernagel (apart Grey p. 310) to E only, apart from 22-22-35. Driver, introduction 1913, p. 66-7, is not sure whether chs. 23-24 belong to J or E or whether they are the work of the compiler who used both sources, and therefore leaves the question unanswered.


11. This has been developed into a theory about two entirely different stories about Balaam: Wellhausen p. 109-10, and all commentators after him: Gray p. 308-9, Mowinckel p. 257-8, Rudolph p. 106-11, 127. For additional reasons see ch. 1. #9.
22. All the traditional commentaries.
23. Von Gall, see #2 of the Summary.
24. Gressmann, Pfeiffer, Mowinckel (3rd and 4th oracle).
25. This question has been dealt with almost thoroughly by Mowinckel, the advocate of the Oral Tradition theory.
26. This is the view of Wellhausen p. 111-112. The distinction between idolatry and sacred prostitution cannot be upheld, as both were highly interwoven: see Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel, p. 73-76. To Nu 251-3 compare Ex 3415-16. —Wellhausen's view was taken over by Dillmann, K. Thiel, Bacon, Driver, Gray: see Gray, p. 384; also by Rudolph, p. 130-1.
27. Gressmann, p. 383516, assumes that the incident of Baal Peor is a legend of a place to relate the destruction of the Israelites who were punished thus because they abandoned the religion of Y and worshipped an indigenous Baal. For a discussion of M. Noth's view, see chapter.
28. The question is then asked whether this story (251-5) had originally belonged to either of the assumed two Balaam Stories or whether it had had an existence of its own and was later added by the redactor to the Balaam Pericope in such a way that its beginning was omitted: Wellhausen, and taken over again, with certain changes, by
the above mentioned commentators.


30. Gray, p. 320-1. "The exclusive spirit of the later age could not tolerate the appearance of a true prophet of God among the heathen; it consequently took care to represent him in an unfavorable light... The later references in the OT prove that this depreciatory Haggadah developed early, and much of which there is only later evidence may be considerably earlier in design." (p. 320)

31. Gray p. 318-21 contains a fairly detailed discussion of this question. Gressmann, Mowinckel, Rudolph and Eisfeldt, adhering to the composite literary character of the Balaam Narrative, do not seem to regard this as a problem any more.

32. This is a point of major importance. It has been recognized that Balaam utters his oracles like a prophet, but it has not been admitted that he actually was a prophet. Wellhausen (p. 111) terms his oracles "prophecies". Baentsch, Numeri, in HKAT, Goettingen 1903, p. 591, saw very clearly that Balaam is described like a prophet of Y.: Y. talks to him as to a prophet, Balaam calls him "my god", receives his revelations from him and feels strongly, like any other prophet of Y., that he cannot escape the power of this god nor his responsibility before him; as if the ethical spirit of Y.'s religion had influenced him.

Similarly Gray p. 317; "Of the religious presuppositions of the story the most striking is the recognition of Y.'s
revelation of this purposes concerning Israel to one who was not an Israelite; and of the familiar intercourse of this foreign seer with the God of Israel. In one place (2218) Balaam indeed speaks of "Y., my God", just as an Israelite did...to the writer's mind, the God of Israel reveals Himself outside the limits of the chosen people". See also p. 318. Gressmann, p. 344 n. 1: Denn"finden beiden letzten Liedern wird Bileam neu eingeführt und überdies bereits als Prophet geschildert. Die beiden ersten Lieder zeigen noch keine Spur davon...". For a somewhat different statement see p. 332 which will be dealt with in ch. 

Similarly M. Loehr, AO 4 (1927), p. 88. (For Mowinckel, the question has become somewhat secondary, as he regards the whole Balaam Narrative prima facie as a saga and legend. He notes the change from the two last oracles (which he attributes to J) to the first two oracles (E), p. 260-1; but according to this view, Balaam appears in ch. 23 in a more favourable light than in ch. 24, and the religious level of 23 he regards higher than 24! As can be easily seen, the opposite is the case. The Balaam who appears more like a prophet is certainly the one of ch. 24, and not of ch. 23, where sacrifices are thought necessary to obtain Y.'s word. Here Gressmann is certainly right, likewise Eis"feldt p. 222. For more detailed proofs see ch. 

The importance of this problem has also been recognized by Albright (from Stone Age to Christianity, Doubleday Anchor Books, New York 1157 p. 302)
"Balaam (thirteenth century B.C.) was a diviner, not a prophet, though he played a rôle somewhat like that of later prophets".

A proof of major importance is of course that the introductions to the two oracles in ch. 24 bear the unmistakable character of prophetic utterances. (The full proof consists of the "Gesammtschau" of our interpretation, namely that Balaam stands between prophecy and magic, which can therefore be given only later.) There remains therefore the only possible conclusion that Balaam was actually a prophet. Defining Balaam as a seer or diviner who spoke Y.'s word is in fact tantamount to attribute him prophecy. As will be instantly shown, this does not exclude that Balaam acted also sometimes as a diviner, which seems to us essential for the basic ideas of the whole narrative: see also ch. 2 #6.

33. The detailed proofs were given by Daiches; see Albright, JBL 63 (1944), p. 231 n. 141. For further proofs, see ch. 34. Wellhausen, p. 111; Gray, p. 316-19; Mowinckel, p. 233-5.

35. As far as the critical view goes, after Wellhausen the question was thought to have been decided and was not taken up any more by the critical school. Characteristically enough, Albright's position is far more cautious, see esp. JBL, p. 207; as to the oracles, he thinks that all of them were attributed to Balaam, or at least reflect the atmosphere...
phase of his age (p. 233).

36. For which reason the rabbis already regarded the Balaam Narrative as a separate unit; b. Baba Batra 14b.

37. Therefore most commentators think that the narrative had originally not belonged at all to the Book of Numbers, but was for some (unknown) reason incorporated into it by the redactor of the Pentateuch.

38. Actually every commentator deals with this difficulty; if however the Balaam Narrative is considered a story by itself which was later incorporated into the Pentateuch, it sufficed that it was supposed to have happened at the time the conquest when Israel passed through the land of Moab. - For our views, see ch.

39. The detailed discussion of the arguments for any specific date of the Balaam Narrative will follow the literary criticism and evaluation. See ch.

40. See for instance Albright, From Stone Age to Christianity, p. 249-52.

41. Albright, The Oracles etc. p. 233, From Stone Age etc. p. 302.

42. Albright, The Oracles etc. p. 231 n. 141, From Stone Age etc. p. 198.
Chapter 8: Previous Approaches

A summary about the more important views expressed in major works on the Balaam Pericope.

1. Wellhausen (1885)
2. Von Gall (1900)
3. Gray (1903)
4. Daiches (1909)
5. Gressmann (1913)
6. Mowinckel (1930)
7. Rudolph (1938) and Eissfeldt (1939)
8. Albright (1944)
9. Conclusions and Outlook
A Summary about the More Important Views Expressed in Major Works on the Balaam Pericope

1. Wellhausen

After the Graf-Wellhausen Hypothesis had established itself, 4 principal sources were recognized in the Hexateuch, JEDP, according to their historical sequence. Wellhausen himself began the analysis of the Balaam Pericope in his "Komposition des Hexateuch" in 1885. As D and P were entirely absent, it was of course natural to assign it to JE. The difficulties of a unified conception were clearly recognized by W., as e.g. 22:22-35 within the story, two stories about Balaam, the changes in divine names, the differences between the last two and the first two parables; the final redactor he assumed to be J, whom he believed to have added 24:20-24. His views have been the fundament on which almost all the subsequent critical work has been built, and are therefore of great importance. W. himself, however, seemed to have had serious doubts about his own construction, which were not shared by later critics any more.
2. **Von Gall**

The next one whose contribution is important is Von Gall. In his "Zusammensetzung und Herkunft der Bileam-Perikope" in 1900 he analyzed the narrative and especially the parables. His hypercritical analysis of the narrative was repudiated by most commentators after him. According to his opinion, the last three parables did not originally belong to the narrative, but were secondary material which was successively incorporated later. All the 4 poems he regarded as post-exilic \(24_{23}-24\) he related to the invasion of Pompeius, or even to the time of Jesus. These views have also been rejected, and must be regarded today altogether impossible because of the Hebrew texts of the first century and before which have in the meantime been discovered, but also because of the archaic language of the parables themselves, which has become clearer than ever through the material adduced by Albright. \(5\)
3. Gray

His detailed commentary (Numbers, in ICC, 1903) is much influenced by the work of his predecessors, namely Carpenter-Herford, Kuenen, Kalisch, Dillmann, Kittel, Driver, Cornill, Bacon, Keil. Gray analysed closely the problem of the divine names in the ancient texts and versions. He generally followed Wellhausen's views against the unity of the pericope. He divides the text between J and E but develops his own views about two entirely different stories about Balaam which were united in the present text, but which he regards as reconstructable. In both stories Balaam appears as a true prophet who does not refuse to fulfill Y.'s command. According to Gray, the main purpose of the story is definitely not the character of Balaam, which is of secondary importance only. The aim of the story is then to describe Y.'s power and his providence to protect his people, and Moab is essentially not different from Egypt. This he supposes to have been the main topic of the two original stories. It was only in later times that the figure of Balaam was changed into an unfavorable one by the influence of the Haggadic Midrash on the O.T.
4. Daiches

An article important by its contribution to the problems of the Balaam Narrative appeared in 1909 by S. Daiches: "Balaam - a Babylonian bārū" (in the Hilprecht Anniversary Volume, Leipzig 1909). For the first time, Babylonian parallels were made use of to illustrate several passages of this narrative. The basic idea was rather simple: if Balaam, as told in the Bible, was a qōšēm from Aram Naharayim, there should exist some parallels in the corresponding literary genre of the Babylonian-Assyrian culture. Daiches made use mainly of the "Ritueltafeln fuer den Wahrsager (bārū)", edited and translated by H. Zimmern in his "Beitraege zur Kenntnis der Babylonischen Religion" (Leipzig 1901). By these comparisons it became at once clear that Balaam actually performed a magical ritual before obtaining his first and second oracles. Daiches' proofs are convincing, but the importance of his material was not recognized by subsequent commentators (Gressmann, Mowinckel, Rudolph, Eissfeldt) who still continued to debate in terms of the Wellhausen School about sources, composition and redaction. While Daiches pointed out these Babylonian parallels and thus established that Balaam acted like a bārū, he did not attempt an interpretation of the complex personality of Balaam or of the narrative about him.
In his "Nose u. Seine Zeit," 1913, he was the first to investigate the "Saga of Balaam" not only from the text-critical point of view, as his predecessors had done, but also taking into account the motifs of the saga and their historical form. He found much primitive and legendary material in the Balaam Narrative, and reached far-reading conclusions by comparing what he believed to be similar material in sagas of other peoples. The main motif of the saga of Balaam, namely the change from curse to blessing, he thinks to have been created by the free imagination of a late editor. His treatment of the parables is very scanty. Gressmann's attempt was important because he tried to broaden the scope of the investigation by introducing comparative anthropological material. His results, however, were altogether unsatisfactory because he reduced the story to a very low, primitive level which is not borne out by the story itself. The critique leveled by Hahn at the anthropological school of O.T. science in general certainly applies also to Gressmann's method.
Mowinckel

A new note was introduced by Mowinckel in his very detailed article "Der Ursprung der Bilsamsage" in 1930. By looking for the "situation in Life" ("Sitze im Leben") and by taking into account possible changes brought about by oral tradition, Mowinckel tried to solve the difficult problems from a different angle. His work must be understood also as a reaction against the one-sided literary criticism which had been much overdone. In his analysis of sources he mainly follows Wellhausen against Gressmann, but adopts G.'s view as to the nature of the Saga of the Balaam Narrative. Against G., who thought that the parables might be secondary and that the summary material must be sought in the prose narrative, Mowinckel tries to find the original story behind the 4 parables, and the main point of the story he sees in the change of the curse into a blessing. His article contains therefore also a detailed analysis of the four parables (but he did not comment on the additional oracles in the fourth parable). Nevertheless, he was unable to disengage himself from the arbitrary method of the critical school, and thus his results are very similar to those which had been obtained before him.
Rudolph and Eissfeldt

Rudolph, according to the view developed by him that there is no E narrator in the Hexateuch, set out to prove the same for the Balaam Pericope. Rudolph assumes that the author of J united two originally contradictory stories on Balaam, to which he added the last two parables. These results, however, were opposed by my most commentators who still find J and E in the pericope. Eissfeldt subjects Rudolph's position to a critical review. The question is if Rudolph's assumption of one source, namely J, is superior to the first general view of J and E. Eissfeldt showed conclusively that Rudolph had not succeeded to prove his position, because practically he also required two sources, J and E, and a redactor in addition to them.

It is a matter of fact, very little real progress in the understanding of the Balaam Pericope had been made during those fifty years (1889-1939) beyond the analysis indicated by Wellhausen. Recognizing the importance of the contribution of Daiches, he advanced the view that the description of Balaam fitted very well that of a Babylonian king of the 13th century BCE. Thus, a new way for a radically different interpretation of the entire pericope was paved.
Conclusion

We think that the directions shown by Albright should be followed up, and that possibly some new aspects might be introduced. The question how far Balaam acts like a magician and diviner has not yet been investigated according to standards of modern research. Whereas an affinity between divination and magic has always been recognized in this pericope, the probability of a genuine prophecy of Balaam has never seriously been asked, nor the possible relationship between prophecy and divination, and certainly not between prophecy and magic. Furthermore, the possibility whether the pericope is capable of an integral, unified interpretation around the character of Balaam has not been seriously dealt with any more since Wellhausen, in spite of recent important changes in the view of the relationship between J and E. Many of the apparent doublets and contradictions of the narrative can be shown to be creations of a hyper-critical attitude, no longer justified especially after the discovery of the Ugaritic texts. Similarly, many of the suggested emendations have been recognized as unnecessary because of a new evaluation of the Masoretic text.

All these developments make today a new approach possible. Interpreting the Balaam Narrative anew, we think to be able to arrive at entirely new conclusions.
Notes to the Summary

Chapter 9

1. p. 109-111. For a detailed discussion of any view summarized here see the following chapters.


3. See G.B. Gray, Numbers (ICC), p. 310: Von Gall thought that 23:13-24:2 was the work of 5 successive editors all later than JE. These views are interesting today only because of their extreme conclusions.


5. Albright, op. cit., p. 208-211.


7. Op. cit., p. 318; the difference expresses itself in the way in which Balaam received or obtained oracles.


10. H. Gressmann, Mose u. seine Zeit, 1913, p. 33. Therefore much is made of the episode of the angel and the speaking ass: p. 323-27.


24a. Albright, op. cit., p. 208; as to the historical role of Balaam, p. 231-2.


Ninth Chapter: Suggested Solution

1. The Divine Names in the Prose Text in M, Sam and LXX
2. The Divine Names in the Oracles
3. The Temptation of Balaam as Basic Assumption of the Narrative; "Elohim" and "Malakh Y."
4. The First and Second Delegation
5. The Encounter between Balaam and the Malakh Y.; the Speaking Ass
6. The Connection between the Oracles and the Prose Narrative
7. The Baal Peor Incident
Chapter 9 Part 1

The Divine Names in the Prose Text of Nu 22-24, in M, Sam and LXX

1. The Problem
2. The Character of Ancient Translations
3. The Development of M
4. The Targumim and the Syriac
5. Tendencies of Sam and LXX
6. Table of Variations of Divine Names in M, Sam and LXX
7. Comparison between LXX and M (and Sam)
8. Comparison between Sam and M (and LXX)
9. Results of the Comparison between M, Sam and LXX
10. The Working Hypothesis of a Unified Balaam Narrative
11. Distribution of Divine Names in M
12. The Difficulties within M
The Divine Names

1. The Problem

As already pointed out, one of the main problems of the Balaam Pericope, especially in its prose text, is its use of various divine names, which was one of the two major factors contributory to its suggested division in J and E: apart from the assumed insertion of (the paragraph containing) the narrative of the speaking ass, 22:22-35a, being the only paragraph which has 10 times "Malakh Y.", not found elsewhere in the M text of the Balaam Pericope.

The problem becomes much more complex by additional differences in the occurrence of divine names among the ancient recensions, i.e. the Masoretic text (M), the Samaritan recension (Sam), and the ancient versions: the Septuagint (LXX) Targum Onqelos (Onq), other Targumim, and the Syriac version (Syr), and the Vulgata.

The aim of our investigation is to find, if possible, how these divergent readings came into being assuming essentially one common Vorlage underlying all of them; or, whether they reflect independent traditions going back to Vorlagen of M different from one another as well as from the Textus receptus of M.

There are two methods to deal with these problems: the first, to compare - somewhat mechanically - the readings of the different recensions and versions, and to try to arrive at conclusions as to the most original - and therefore probably the best - text; the second, to find out which reading must be the best because the meaning of the passage,
its context and interpretation, demand it thus. The second method, however, can be misleading because the meaning must ultimately be based on a reliable text, and the interpreter has to be careful not to substitute his subjective 'eisegeges' for an objective 'exegesis'. The history of biblical interpretation - Jewish, as well as Christian, ancient and medieval as well as modern, religious as well as scientific - is replete with 'eisegeges' of this kind.

The ideal method, of course, is when both lines of argument, comparison of recensions and versions as well as exegesis, lead to the same conclusions. We shall therefore try to follow these two lines independently from each other. However, it will be seen that either one leads to the same results.

2. The Character of Ancient Translations

Every translator has his own special audience in mind, for whom he translates. Thus every translation is necessarily an interpretation, almost a commentary. This is essentially true for ancient translators, but is equally true of modern translations, as e.g. those of Buber-Rosenzweig, the Revised Standard Version (the RSV), and the new JPS translation. As the ancient translators faced essentially the same problem with which we are confronted here, and were unable to solve its, certain changes are only to be expected. In addition, theologically motivated changes cannot be ruled out, whether caused by inner developments or by apologetic tendencies.

3. The development of M

Here it will suffice to state that M attained its final
textual stage only during the first half of the 2nd century CE. Therefore a different recension of Sam and different renderings of the LXX, especially may well reflect earlier textual stages of M. These stages have now been conclusively proved by the finds of biblical scrolls among the Dead Sea Scrolls. On the other hand it can be taken for granted that the Jewish translations, especially the Targumim, later revised and straightened out any readings different from the by then accepted and standardized text of M. Consequently, the number of real differences between them and M is extremely small, but then of great interest, pointing to a probably earlier different reading of M.

4. The Targumim and the Syriac

The origin of an Aramaic translation among the Jews in Palestine must have been very old. But the three extant Targumim: the Palestinian Pentateuch Targum; the Jerusalem Targumim (I and II) of the Pentateuch (also called the Pseudo-Jonathan Targumim); and the Targum Onqelos, cannot be used for reconstruction of an earlier of M for the reasons just stated. Onqelos is the most literal translation of these three. Now throughout the prose text, especially of the Balaam prophecy - as everywhere else in the Pentateuch - Onq renders both "YHWH" and "Elohim" by "YHWH". But there cannot be any doubt that this was not the reading of M when Onqelos underwent its final redaction, assumed to have taken place in Babylonia during the 2nd or 3rd century CE. When it was first translated that way is rather difficult to say; the motives behind this rendering were most probably of theological nature.
As to the Syriac, it reflects exactly M; it has throughout "Marya" for "y" and "Elaha" for "(he`)Elohim". Therefore nothing can be learnt from it for our problem. Likewise, the Vulgata corresponds exactly with M. Thus our problem narrows down to Sam and LXX.

5. Tendencies of Sam and LXX

There is ample evidence to indicate that the LXX, as much as they tried to translate faithfully and literally, would nevertheless render a difficult word or expression by a somewhat different Greek term, and would not slavishly adhere to M whenever they saw fit to do so, for the reason stated above. A similar approach can be observed in the Sam recension. However, at their time the M text was still in a state of certain instability and fluctuation. There were probably still several recensions of M extant from which they could choose, including Vulgātexte. Nor was the sanctity of M, and therefore its absolute unchangeability, an already established fact at their time. Moreover, it is well known that neither Sam nor LXX were opposed to conscious changes from theological and apologetical motives, although this approach must have been regarded much more legitimate at those times than it is today.

To sum up, the investigation of the differences of divine names among M, LXX and Sam has to take into consideration all these various factors and tendencies.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LXX</th>
<th>Sam</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(ο ὅς)</td>
<td>ὅς πῶς</td>
<td>(ο ὅς)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Κυρίεις σε ὅς ὅς</td>
<td>κυρίεις σε ἀργα</td>
<td>(2^{20})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ο ὅς)</td>
<td>πῶς πᾶν</td>
<td>(ο ὅς)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ο ὅς)</td>
<td>πᾶν</td>
<td>(2^{22})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

- (ο ὅς) with πᾶν in LXX and Κυρίεις σε ὅς ὅς in Sam.
- \(2^{20}\) in M.
- \(2^{22}\) in M.

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**Additions:**

- \(2^{20}\) to LXX: καὶ Βασιλέα τῶν ἐν θεοῦ εἰναὶ πᾶν.
- \(2^{22}\) to LXX: ἐπισύροντος ἐν θεοῦ.

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**Corrections:**

- \(2^{20}\) to LXX: καὶ ἐν ἐπισύροντος ἐν θεοῦ.
- \(2^{22}\) to LXX: ἐπισύροντος ἐν θεοῦ.
7. Comparison between LXX and M (and Sam)

The method generally accepted is to regard any reading of M as suspect whenever Sam agrees with LXX against M. But this principle cannot always be applied, because readings common to Sam and LXX may have originated in a Vulgar text which was current before the final M text was promulgated; so that there is often only one witness against M, which makes a decision as to the better reading much more difficult.

The perusal of the LXX to the Balaam Pericope shows very clearly that the LXX deviated from their Vorlage in their translation of divine names. It is not only that Sam agrees here with M in most cases, but the changes made by the LXX can easily be explained. Bearing in mind that the LXX had to overcome the same difficulties with which we are confronted, it is not surprising that they came up with solutions which look surprisingly similar to those arrived at by the moderns.

a/ In 22:13 the LXX readers "Y" by "ο θεός" because verses 9, 10 and 12 had it. But both M and Sam have "Y"; the LXX simply harmonizes, thus 'solving' his exegetical problem.

b/ In 22:22 which is difficult because of the sequence "Elohim...Malakh Y." in M, LXX simply changes the latter into "ο ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ", thus again harmonizing the text. Consequently, LXX renders each "Malakh Y." by "Malakh Elohim" until verse 35 (in v. 31, only A, but neither B nor S), and likewise "Y" in verses 28 and 31 by "Elohim"; the only exception being in v. 34 - for no apparent reason, as in v. 35 the LXX has again "Malakh Elohim". Sam has everywhere the same reading as M, apart from 22:22a.
c/ Likewise, in ch. 23 every "Y" is rendered by "Elohim" (excluding the oracles), apart from 23:17, again for no apparent reason; and once more in 24:13b - but not in 24:13a. (In ch. 23 the Sam has some different readings too.)

To sum up, the tendency of the LXX is obviously one of harmonization, but not carried out entirely. The use of harmonization in the LXX is a well-known tendency of this version. The reason why "Y, " was changed into "Elohim" (ὁ theós) and not vice versa as in Origelos, is probably to be sought in 22:9,10,12 where "Elohim" appears first, which was then consistently used by the LXX.

Another possible explanation is that there might have been a tendency to lower Balaam's prophetical status by letting only "Elohim" speak to him, or the "Malakh Y.,", but not "Y" himself.

Because of these harmonizing changes of divine names within the prose text of the Balaam Pericope, the conclusion is that the LXX version(s) can therefore not be used as an independent source to establish the original text of M. It is even probably that they do not reflect a different M Vorlage within this pericope.

8. Comparison between Sam and M (and LXX)

a/ As to 22:20, where Sam has "Mal'kh Elohim" for "Elohim" in M, see to(c) father down.

b/ In 22:22, Sam has "Y." for "Elohim" in M. The reason is, of course, the immediately following "Malakh Y." in the same verse. It is instructive to compare the readings of M, Sam and LXX to this verse:
LXX reads 'Elohim' twice and Sam twice "Y.". It should now be obvious that Sam, like LXX, harmonizes when confronted by exegetical difficulties which he is unable to overcome. The only possible deduction from both Sam and LXX is that only M has preserved the original text, or, that the textus receptus of M has at least the same reading which had been before both Sam and LXX. Therefore Sam, too, must be regarded as suspect, as far as the divine names in the Balaam Pericope are concerned. 30

c/ 23:3-5,16

Another instructive example as to the workings of both Sam and LXX can be found here:

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
\text{v.3} & \text{v.4} & \text{v.5} \\
M: & \text{Y.} & \text{Elohim} & \text{Y.} \\
Sam: & \text{Elohim} & \text{Malakh Elohim} & \text{Malakh Y.} \\
LXX: & \text{Elohim} & \text{Malakh Elohim} & \text{Elohim}
\end{array}
\]

If we were to decide by majority, we should read E. in v.3, and E. in v.4; v.5 must be left open. But the 4 cases in which Sam has "Malakh E/Y" outside 22:22-35 are suspect, because neither M nor LXX has them. Moreover, all these four cases - 22:20, 23:4, 5, 16 - deal with E or Y (in M) speaking to Balaam. It seems then that Sam wanted to mitigate the too direct expressions of E./Y. conversing directly with Balaam, and therefore added the "Malakh", which he found anyway
in this pericope. (The "memra of Y." in Orq might be compared here.) Our conclusion therefore is that Sam had originally "Elohim" in v.4, and "Y." in v.5.\(^3\)

For the same reason, Sam changed in 22:20 the "Elohim" of M to "Malakh Elohim".

Besides, the transition from"Malkh E" in v.4 to "Malkh Y.," in v.5 is altogether anomalous, and entirely unprecedented.

There remains then v.5, where both Sam and LXX read "Elohim" against "Y." of M. As already pointed out, LXX is not to be relied upon when reading "Elohim"; according to his system all through ch.22, he most probably changed here too an original "Y." into "Elohim" because of v.4. As v.3 would tell about the most direct communication between Y. and Balaam, he was certainly prone to 'lower' the revelation of Balaam, and would therefore prefer "Elohim" to "Y.". Therefore the "Y." of M in v.5 is still to be preferred; it being also the lectio difficilior, having the sequence Y. - Elohim - Y. in the three verses 3-5.\(^3\)

In 23:16, which repeats virtually 23:4-5, Sam had the choice between his "Malakh Elohim" of v.4 and his "Malkh Y." of v.5, and chose to repeat the latter; he may have been influenced too by "Y." of the following verse.\(^7\)

d/ 23:26 is the second case in which Sam agrees with LXX-(ha-)Elohim - against the "Y." of M. The harmonizing tendency of the LXX to render "Y" by "Elohim" (in prose) has already been recognized. Sam is probably influenced by the "ha-Elohim" of the following verse, 27.\(^3\) Another possibility is that, having so far in ch. 23 used Malakh Y/E prose text around the first two oracles (apart from 23:12), he would of course finish it that way.
To sum up, in the Sam recension of the divine names in these prose parts of the Balaam Pericope a harmonizing tendency to straighten out a difficult text is clearly recognizable. Therefore the Sam cannot be regarded as trustworthy in this pericope as far as the divine names are concerned.

Now looking again at the verses in which Sam has divine names which differ from M, it appears that Sam wanted to avoid a too direct contact between Y. and Balaam, and therefore lowered the revelation of Y. or Elohim to Malakh Y./Elohim. This would constitute an exact parallel to the 'memra' of Oreglos and the other Palestinian Targumim. In this case, the really different readings of Sam would be limited to 22:22 only (a clear case of harmonization, as already shown), and 23:26 (where Sam stuck to his principle); which means that Sam had the exact Vorlage of M before him! [If our assumption is right, the question may be asked if Sam too had 'Vulgaertexte', besides other, regular texts.]

9. Results of the Comparison between M, Sam and LXX

The results of our investigation of the differences between M, Sam and LXX as to divine names are these:

1/ The Vorlage of both Sam and LXX must have been different from the version now found in them. The decisive, but not only, proofs are 22:22 and 23:3-5.

2/ Tracing their partially mutually exclusive renderings, it is even possible to conclude that their M Vorlage was identical with the M text which later became the final, standardized text. (Again, this statement is limited to the divine names of the Balaam Pericope only.)
3/ Both LXX and Sam try to harmonize, LXX to a greater extent than Sam; the latter not very successfully. (Any mutual influence between these two versions is unlikely). Therefore, both Sam and LXX do not preserve the rendering of divine names as found in their recension(s) of M which served as their Vorlage(n).

4/ In both Sam and LXX the tendency to lower the degree of the divine revelation to Balaam was probably a contributing factor in their way of rendering the divine names. If our assumption is right, the renderings of Sam and LXX (like those of the Targumim) were partially influenced by interpretative - in the final analysis: theological - considerations.

5/ The most reliable text - as far as divine names are concerned - must be attributed to M. However, it is exactly the M text which has proved itself most difficult because of its constant change of divine names. On this ground alone, the principle of preference of the lectio difficilior should be applied. The ancient scribes and translators - who were always commentators - tried to evade the problem of emendation of the M text - exactly as almost all the moderns do in their attempts of interpretation.

10. The Working Hypothesis of a Unified Balaam Narrative

Investigation of the use of divine names in the Balaam Pericope should be made prima facie on the assumption that the whole narrative is uniform. The method to start from the results of the theory that the narrative, containing the divine names "Elohim" and "Y.", should be divided into two or more
strands cannot be accepted, because it a priori excludes the possibility of a uniform composition. Even if the theory of the division of the narrative parts of the Pentateuch into J and E is acknowledged, it nevertheless remains a hypothesis, so long as no texts of the assumed literary sources as such have been found. For this reason the opposite method must be regarded perfectly legitimate to start with. Thus we proceed to regard the unified Balaam narrative as a working hypothesis. The question has then to be asked whether a uniform system in the change of divine names underlies the narrative of the Balaam Pericope, and, if so, to explain its logical, or rather theological meaning, significance and application. It is exactly here that we suggest an approach entirely different from Wellhausen and his school.

11. Distribution of Divine Names in M

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Divine Name</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/ Balaq</td>
<td>Y, Elohim, Malakh Y, El</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/ Balaam (in prose)</td>
<td>Y, Elohim, Malakh Y, El</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/ Balaam in his oracles (in poetry)</td>
<td>Malakh Y, Malakh Y, Malakh Y, Malakh Y, El</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/ The Narrator</td>
<td>Malakh Y, El</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 19, 9, 10, 8, 2, 1, 49

The name "Y." appears 19 times; so does "(ha)Eloh" and "Malakh Y."

From this table it can be seen at once that Balaam - when speaking in prose - and Balaq pronounce the divine names 14 times; Balaam in his oracles pronounces divine names - in
cluding Shadday and Elyon - 14 times; the narrator, finally, uses them 14 times (Y. and Malak Y.) and 7 times (Ha-Elohim), together 21 times; thus the sum total of divine names in the pericope (Nu 22:2 - 24) is 49, not counting 24:123; if it is included, then 50.

Here the following observation can be made: Balaq and Balaam mention 14 divine names in their scheme against Israel and Y., and are answered by 14 divine names in the blessing oracles of Balaam, destroying thus their schema. This stylistic device might have been intentional so as to bring out the contrast between human purpose as opposed to divine will, but entwined by it. Algether it seems that the use of divine names by the narrator is neither random nor incidental.

A closer analysis shows the following:

1/ Balaq, when talking to Balaam, uses "Y." twice, in 23:17 and 24:11, but once "Ha-Elohim" in 23:27.

2/ Balaam uses in the narrative parts "Y." when speaking to Balaq or his messengers, altogether 10 times: 22:8,13,18,19; 23:3,12,26; 24:1,13,13 (in 22:18: "Y" my god); only in 22:38 he uses "Elohim". (We prefer to assign 24:1 to Balaam, and not to the narrator, because he renders here the thoughts of Balaam.)

3/ Balaam uses in his oracles the following names:

"El" 8 times: 23:8; 23:19,22,23; 24:4,8; 24:16,23
"Shadday" 2 times, only parallel with "El": 24:4,16
"Elyon" once, parallel with "El": 24:16

12. The Difficulties within M

The major difficulties are found in those passages in which the narrator himself varies the names:

1/ The narrator uses constantly "(ה) Elohim" until 22:22; but continues in the same verse with "Malakh Y" until verse 35, using in the same passage also twice "Y." in 22:28, 21. In 23:4 he continues then with "Elohim", but uses "Y." in the next verse; in 23:16, describing almost the same situation as 23:4, "Y." is used.

2/ In a number of similar sentences - 22:18, 23:12, 26, 24:13 - Balaam mentions the name of "Y."; but in one of them, "Elohim" is used: 22:38.

This lack of consistency, as it appears at first sight, is utterly perplexing and can throw any commentator into a state of despair. There seems to be no system whatsoever in these arbitrary changes.

It is only too understandable that it became the consensus of almost all commentators who dealt with this pericope, that this narrative could be no means be regarded as uniform, if only because of these unexplainable variations. As a result, the episode of the meeting between Balaam and the Malakh Y. was taken out, and the rest divided between J and E. Similarly
the oracles were felt not to belong to the original narrative because of their more ancient style; but they were divided again between the first two and the last two. Thus the Balaam Pericope had been divided up into five different parts which were assigned to five different authors, excluding the rédac-
tors and final redactor. Nonetheless, even then not even a remote consensus of opinions could be reached among the different interpreters and commentators.
Notes:to:  The Divine Names

1. Cf. ch.², par. 3 and 5. For the divine names in the oracles see part 2 of this chapter; also not 14 to part 3.

2. The other being its supposed incompatibility between Balaam the qosem and Balaam, the prophet; see ch. 6, part 2.

3. So far, no texts of Nu found among the Dead Sea Scrolls have been published. Cf EM Cross Jr., The Ancient Library of Qumran, Garden City, N.Y., 1958, p. 138-9, 143-4.

4. Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it has become clear that several of the biblical scrolls among them belong to different textual traditions still extant before a later, finalized one, became the official text which obliterated these earlier recensions. In other words: Once the Masoretic text was established, its growing preponderance and finally exclusive use backed by its authority was bound to cause all other proto-Masoretic texts to fall into disuse, and finally to disappear altogether. Cf Cross, op. cit, 125, esp. n. 13. According to Cross, the Sam Pentateuch is of only limited value in the reconstruction of a proto-Masoretic text: op. cit. 127-8. He regards the LXX, however, as much more valuable for such a reconstruction, p. 133-5. His conclusions in these respects seem to be generally valid.

5. Cf. the very judicious remarks of E. Würthwein, Der Text des AT, Stuttgart 1952, 39, to this problem; as to the translation of the LXX, p. 53-56.
6. Which began to appear during the nineteen-twenties in Germany.


8. Its first part, the Torah, appeared in 1962.

9. F. Rosenthal, apud; Wuerthwein, op.cit, 39-40, has pointed out how difficult the problems of the AT versions are.

10. Wuerthwein, op.cit 18; Cross, op.cit., 125-6.

Bo Roberts article: Text, OT, in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, New York-Nashville, 1962, 583-4, assumes a fixed standardized text for pre-Christian times. Segal, Introduction into the OT, Jerusalem, 1950 (in Hebrew), 864-9, thinks that the final text was authorized already after the successful Hasmonean revolt, i.e., about 165 B.C.E. These different assumptions do not exclude one another entirely. Even if the final text was authorized at the earliest suggested date, one has to take into account that until its general acceptance by the normative Jewish community, about the end of the first century C.E., there naturally continued other recensions side by side with it, and certainly the more so in non-normative communities (as e.g. in Qumran, but also in Egypt); especially when it is borne in mind that a copy of a scroll, and particularly of the Pentateuch, because of its sanctity, could and would be used for tens, and sometimes even hundreds, of years.
11. See note 4 of this chapter.

12. Wuerthwein, op.cit., 63

13. Cross, op.cit., 126

14. The historicity of Neh 8:1-8, and 13:24, is accepted, and we see no reason to doubt it. (cf. J. Bright, A History of Israel, Philadelphia, 1959, p. 371). Then the need for a translation of the Torah, into the then prevalent Aramaic dialect, must have been very early, so that the Aramaic translation(s) oral and/or written, may have originated already in the 5th century B.C.E.

15. See note 8 to this chapter; Segal, op.cit., 966

16. The question of this is due to an original translation from the textus receptus of M or due to a later revision of the translation according to the by then normative textus receptus may be left open here.

17. Which only shows that at 400 C.E., M had already become the standard text.

18. Cross, op.cit., 135,137. W.F. Albright, New Light on Early Recensions of the Hebrew Bible, BASOR 140 (1955 Dec., 1955), 27-33, tentatively assumes the existence of an Egyptian M recension, rather different from the M recension which served as a basis for the later textus receptus of M; which would explain the large differences between M and LXX in books like Samuel and Jeremiah.
19. Even taking into account that the translators were orthodox Jews of their times. Another point is that even within the translation of one book one finds traces of more than one translator: Wuerthwein, op.cit., 42-42. In addition, our more complete MSS - The Vatican, and the Sinaitic - date from the 4th century C.E., the Alexandrian from the 5th. Not very much is known so far about their respective developments during several centuries, from the time the first Greek translations were made, certainly not later than during the first half of the 3rd century B.C.E. Kahle, The Cairo Genizah, New York, 1959, 213, proves that there were already translations during the 4th century B.C.E. a period of at least 700 years! Wuerthwein, op.cit., 50. Cf. Segal, op.cit., 935. As a glimpse of the possible development, the Greek papyrus 458 of the John Rylands Library in Manchester can be adduced, dating from the 2nd century B.C.E. Cf. Wuerthwein, op.cit. 56, also D.W. Thomas, The Textual Criticism of the Bible, in: The Bible and Modern Study, Oxford, 1951, 249-5 and especially 259; Kahle, op.cit., 220-2.

20. Wuerthwein, op.cit., 54-56; as to the Samaritan, 38. As well known, the Samaritan has also been influenced by the LXX.

21. We think that it is methodically to be preferred to investigate each recension and version - here Sam and LXX - by itself than to compare them piecemeal, as done by most commentators. It is easier to recognize their characteristics when
Notes to: The Divine Names (cont'd)

21. (cont'd) when they are read and presented as parallel units, i.e. if the LXX to the Balaam Pericope is compared with M of the Balaam Pericope, etc.

22. Cf. Cross, op. cit., 127; Kahle apud Wuerthwein, op. cit., 38

23. Gray, op. cit., 311; Rudolph, 104.

24. Almost none of the commentators asks himself the very obvious question as to the reasons of those changes in the M text. Rudolph, op. cit., 104 note 3.

25. Against Mowinckel, op. cit., 234 n.1. Because 22:7-21 has mostly Elohim, Mowinckel decides that it belongs to E; where it does not, as (v. 13), the LXX read it; in v. 18 and 19, he explains it away in a footnote, not asking himself even once whether the change may have been caused by other reasons.

26. If the whole paragraph of 22:22b-35 has Malakh Y., it stands to reason that verses 28 and 31 should read "Y.", but not "Elohim": against Gray, op. cit., 311

27. See paragraph 8 (of this chapter).

28. It has been argued (Rudolph, op. cit., 105); and others) that it is Biblical usage to use "Elohim", but not "Y.", when foreigners speak with Israelites or vice versa. A close
investigation of the passages generally adduced as proofs does not bear out this claim. CF. Gen 12:17; 14:22 as answer to
14:19-20; 26:28-29; Ex 5:1ff; Nu 20:16; Jo 2:9-12; 9:9; M 21;
1K 10:9; 2K 5:11, 17-18, 8:8, 10, 13, 18:22-25. The passages
for this argument are Gen 20:3, 13 — but disproved by 20:6, 17, 18;
see our remarks.

Gen 31:24 is disapproved by 31:29, 53; Gen 41:16 is followed by
41:25, 28, 32, and 41:39 reverts to 41:16; cf 41:51-52. Ex
18:12, 15-19, 23 (Elohim) is preceded by 18:8-11 (Y.);
1Chr 4:7-8 is followed by 6:2-8. — The question cannot be
adequately dealt with here, as it demands a full-length treat-
ment (see e.g. M. D. Cassuto in: Encyclopedia Migra'ith,
deals with the use of different divine names not only in the
Bible but in the ANE as well, and who certainly succeeds in
showing that the problem is far more complex than the school
of Wellhausen would admit.)

29. Rudolph, op. cit., 104 against Gray, op. cit., 310-311;
who admits however on 311 (bottom) that "no conclusive and
complete explanation of this usage can be given."

30. The treatment of modern commentators to 22a is instructive.
Gray, 311, whose decision is based on "purely textual grounds",
thinks that "Y." was here the original reading. The situation
is here this: Sam and CPH (and 2 like MSS) against M and
GfBSA! Gray's decision is to say the least, very doubtful.
As the narrator so far let deal only E with Balaam, also in
v. 20 where he told him that he might go under a certain
Notes to: The Divine Names (cont'd)

30. (cont'd) condition, it stands to reason that was angry with him.

b/ Rudolph 104: As the change from א to י is against the tendency of LXX and Sam, it follows that M is secondary, the mistake having been caused by E used so far. But the true reason of Rudolph reveals itself in the next sentence: "Therefore the narrative of the ass has throughout "Y," and does not belong within the framework of the Balaam Narrative 22:2-23:26." Here Rudolph's anticipated result influences his sound judgement. Perhaps מ is original - the textual evidence certainly favors it - and may indicate that the narrative of the ass is connected with the rest of the story.

31. As to the reliability of the verses 1-6, against Gray 342 and Rudolph 112, see ch. 5 ("Balaam's Magical Techniques").

32. Apart from the observation, that Balaam, whenever speaking to Balaq or his messengers, uses "Y." (with one exception). This is certainly a weighty argument. See #11 para 2.

33. י" is of course required, like in v.12, for the simple reason that "Y" had spoken twice to Balaam (5.16), or, better, forced him to speak certain words.

34. It is generally agreed that the מ text of the Pentateuch - even taking into account the changes it must have undergone - is still to be regarded the most reliable text, compared with
Notes to: The Divine Names (cont'd)

34 (cont'd) that of any other biblical book, likewise with the ancient versions of the Pentateuch. Because of its importance in Judaism since the time of the return of the exiles from Babylonia (6th -5th century B.C.E.) and consequently its earlier canonization, it was always more closely studied, and more attention was paid to it. Variations in its use of divine names compared to its ancient versions are very rare. As to the more recent valuation of M in general see:

Wuathwein 83-85; Roberts in IDB IV 593; D. Winton Thomas in: The Bible and Modern Study 1951, 241-3.

35. It nevertheless remains a hypo

35. It may be added that the old-established division into J and E has lately been questioned, in varying degrees, by Nowinckel, Pedersen, Engnell, Volz and Noth, even if for various reasons. It is now generally recognized that they contain much common, or at least parallel, material. The whole question is a very complex one and cannot be dealt with here. See the following: CR North, Pentateuchal Criticism, in: Bible and Modern Study, p. 48-3; J Bright, Modern Study of Bible Literature, in: The Bible and the AME, 1961, p. 19.

36. Because of the system suggested by Wellhausen and followed in a very orthodox way by his disciples, the attempt to regard Balaam Pericope as a uniform narrative has never been seriously made after Wellhausen by the critical school.
Notes to: The Divine Names (cont'd)

37. Which depends on its interpretation. If it is understood that someone regards himself a god, it will not be included. But if 'el is the subject of the verse, it has of course to be included.

38. Gray 311; Rudolph 103

39. Almost all moderns since Wellhausen. Actually, the theory of two main sources in the narrative parts of the Pentateuch, namely J and E, has an excellent test-case in the Balaam Pericope. The fact that no clear solution has been coming forth so far from these chapters is liable to throw on the theory itself.

40. The lack of consensus is seen best when the commentaries of Gray (1903), Mowinckel (1930) and Rudolph (1938) are compared. Each of them discusses many various views of many more commentators.
Chapter 9 Part 2

6. The Divine Names in the Oracles

1/ Part 1 of this chapter dealt with the divine names of the Balaam Narrative in the prose text. The following divine names are found in the oracles:

First oracle:

Second oracle:

Third oracle:

Fourth oracle:

2/ The following observations can be made:

"El" appears altogether 8 times; "Shadday" twice and "Elyon" parallel to "El", thus making up the full expression "El Elyon" and "El Shadday"; "Y." two times, and once "Z". his god.

The first name in each oracle is "El", which appears in the oracles instead of "z" of the prose narrative. The identity of "El" with "z" is established in the first oracle by the parallelism "El"//"z", not repeated in any of the later oracles. "z" appears only twice more, once to state that "z" is Israel's god, and then in the nemickh

which is most probably a superlative, in spite of its different grammatical (syntactical) construction from similar expressions. "El"//"Elyon" (//"Shadday") is used only in the introductory lines to the third and fourth oracle, //"Shadday" only the fourth.

3/ In the Bible, "El" is used both as a personal name for "z" but also as an appellative, and a sharp distinction must be made between these two usages. This is likewise true for the Ugaritic texts, where "El" is the personal
In the Tora, "El" is used for "G" only once, in Gen 33:20: Nm 12:13, 16:22 and Dt 32:18. In expressions like, "El" is clearly an appellative and not a personal name. In the poetry of the Tora, the name of "El" for the Canaanite high god, has already been superseded by 5. This is the case in the Song of the Sea, in the Song of Moses, and the Blessings of both Jacob and Moses. But in poetry outside the Tora, especially in the Psalms, "El" instead of 5 appears about 20 times, and several times in parallel expressions like (Ps 73:11, 107:11), (Ps 91:1). All this leads to the hypothesis that there existed doubtless an ancient Canaanite poetic tradition which had these parallels, which was then taken over into Hebrew poetry.

4/ "Elyon" is often used in the Psalms as an epithet of 5, meaning that he is superior to all the other gods: Ps 97:7: The rule of Elyon over the foreign gods makes him for the Bible likewise a ruler of all (the peoples of) the earth: Ps 47:3 and 83:19. For this reason it seems probably that "Elyon" was introduced only in the opening of the fourth oracle which deals with Israel's future victories on several peoples.

5/ The result of these observations is that the divine names and epithets asused in the oracles, and especially the substitution of "El" for 5, indicate very clearly that they belong to early Canaanite or N.W. Semitic poetry. They
may even said to constitute an independent source of such a poetry within the Bible.

In addition to the eight times in which "El" appears in the four oracles, their name "Yisrael" is used in them also eight times, all of them parallel with Ya'akob (Israel) This is certainly no coincidence because Balaq refrains throughout the whole narrative from mentioning the name of Israel even a single time; his messengers act likewise. The reason of this is the magical belief that a name containing a divine name must not be mentioned because it would actualize a possible blessing; or because they understood "Yisrael" as "Y. fights" (or similarly), which again might make useless all their later efforts to curse the people.

Therefore the mentioning of the names Ya'akob/Yisrael as many times as the divine name "El" must be intentional. The pairing of the names El-Yisrael suggests by its consonance the simple idea "El in Yisrael" — which is an essential part of the blessing, particularly in the second oracle which stresses the intimacy of the relationship between Yisrael and El = Y, his god. The conclusion is that the mentioning of the name "Yisrael" in all the four oracles must be regarded as part of the blessing.
41. The only important change in the versions is found in the LXX which exchanges the order of the two names of the first oracle. The order in the other versions is to be preferred because the other three oracles also begin with El.

42. Also found in Ps 10:12.

43. For this view see also N.H. Torczyner, The Book of Job, Jerusalem 1941, (Hebrew) p. 48.

44. Cf. םָּאַּנְוֹ in Ps 104:16 and שָׁאַנְוֹ in Zach. 14:13, שָׁאַנְוֹ in Ps 36:7 and שָׁאַבָ ה in Is. 14:13. See T.H. Gaster, JAOS 70, 1950, 12 and ibid., The Religion of the Canaanites, 119, who explains these expressions as "the personification of the power believed to dwell in any object or phenomenon which excited a reaction of awe." Cf. Gordon, UM 1955, I 13.20.

45. For a summary of the problems of the divine names El, El Elyon, El Shadday, El as head of the Canaanite pantheon, see M.D. Cassuto, Encyclopedia Miqra'it 1, 283-292.


47. Apart from these four cases, which are therefore instructive for our proof.
48. e.g. Ps 10:11 16:1 17:6 19:2; outside the Psalms in Is 8:8 Mal 1:9 2 Sam 23:5.

49. Therefore it is to be assumed that wherever "El" is used for "G" in OT poetry—and there is no case of a prose text—it reflects an ancient Canaanite or NW Semitic poetic tradition. The same may be said when there is a parallelism of the kind: name of a god || epithet, as: b'l || 'ly'n in Ugaritic texts. Cf. Ps 7:11 9:3 92:2.

50. against Albright, Oracles, 217 n. 59.

51. In addition to the proofs adduced by Albright in his Oracles etc.


53. except 24:18 whose parallel is in v. 19; cf. Albright, Oracles 221 n. 94.
Chapter 9 Part 3: The Temptation of Balaam as Basic Assumption of the Narrative: Elohim and Malkh Y.

1. The Temptation of Balaam by Y.

The Balaam Narrative unfolds the drama of the man whose position is the peculiar one between prophecy and divination. This drama becomes a great one because Balaam was known and famous as a prophet of Y. Therefore, the question is not whether Balaam will finally succeed in cursing the people or not—a very important point not realized by most commentators! Any kind of struggle between Balaam, the man, and Y., is out of question, is absolutely impossible in the conception of basic relationship between them, between the omnipotent god and man, weak and powerless against him. The real question—and therefore the main point of interest—is this: Y. proves Balaam his prophet by tempting him: will Balaam carry out Y.'s will or his own will, when much money and honor are at stake? Will he remain a true and faithful prophet, or will he finally become a diviner?

Translated into Biblical conceptions and ideas, a council takes place in heaven. A Satan (not: Satan!), the "counsel for the prosecution," brings forth the argument, which in itself is already in the nature of an accusation, that Balaam is not really the faithful prophet he pretends to be. Therefore the satan receives permission from Y. to substantiate his claim by leading Balaam into temptation. The ideal opportunity presents itself at the occasion of Balaq's offer to Balaam, accompanied by the promise of a very large reward, that Balaam, Y.'s prophet, shall curse Israel, Y.'s people, in the name of Y.
2. **Theological Implications of Man's Temptation by Y.**

The classical case of what is supposed to happen in heaven before a human being is tempted is told in Job 1:6-12. Its theological implications are of major importance to the understanding of Biblical theology in general, and for the Balaam Narrative especially.

The question is the very famous one - unde malum? What is the source of evil in this world? This question becomes most actual when human suffering is intense, and especially when there seems to be no real cause for it, when the person afflicted is not conscious of any moral or religious transgression which would justify the suffering. One of the answers often given in the Bible is that Y., in order to be convinced of man's goodness, will prove and test him by exposing him to temptation. As, however, divine omniscience and prescience are not taken for granted, and human suffering is necessarily involved, the task of not being convinced, of the always existent doubt in any man's absolute goodness, is transferred from Y. to one of the angels present at the divine council. According to his task he is called satan, and he is actually the only angel in the Bible - apart from the very late book of Daniel - who is given a designation (not a name, as often erroneously interpreted). Historically, the gods of other peoples have in the Bible been subjected to a process of degradation and integration of such a kind that their different tasks and roles were incorporated into those of Y.; these he may allot to angels; all of them, without any exceptions, absolutely subject to Y.
However, it has always to be borne in mind, that there is actually never any real difference of opinion between Y. and the มาส satan. (Any such ideas belong either to the ANE conception of struggles between gods, or to the later apocryphal literature, or to the NT.) In the Bible, the มาส satan fulfills a task only within Y.'s domain of rule in Y.'s relationship to human beings. The satan is then only a messenger of his lord, bound as such to keep within the limits of the task assigned to him. No human volitions or desires are therefore anywhere ascribed to him; his task is the reason of his being so that he is nameless, like all other Biblical angels, and given in his absolute dependence of his lord the appellation of one of the Bney Elohim, or, for short, Elohim. Any overstepping of his task is not even thought of possible in the Balaam Narrative; he is not even called "satan," but is made to say about himself that he was sent to be an adversary, a satan to Balaam, when he reveals himself to Balaam to tell him the reason for which he has been sent. His name thus clearly indicated his function only, and its limitation.

Essentially the background of the Balaam Narrative is the same as that of the Book of Job; the only difference being that Job is tempted as a man in his relation to Y., whereas Balaam is tempted as a prophet. Thus here no suffering is included, but the question how faithful a prophet Balaam is to Y. comes up; whether he will remain faithful even under trying circumstances.
3. The 2 Designation of Divine Messengers in the OT

The satan, as one of the divine messengers of Y., is called Elohim or ha-Elohim as one of the Bnai (ha-) Elohim. The reason that the narrator of the Balaam story - but not Balaam - uses Elohim is that the reader should know from the beginning that Balaam is being tempted. This is clearly proved by 22:10:

This definite article has been overlooked by almost all commentators, but is actually of great importance: Balaam answers that an Elohim, a certain divine messenger sent to him as an angel, appearing to him most probably - like 22:20 - in a dream at night. That the definite article is not accidental is proved by Gen 20:3,6:

When, however, an Elohim appears in visible form to a human being who is in a state of being awake - as opposed to a dream or a prophetical vision - such an Elohim is very often called Mal'akh Y. Also, the same angel can appear to a human being in different modes of revelation, necessitated by varying circumstances.

Therefore the Mal'akh Y. who meets Balaam riding on his way is identical with the (ha-) Elohim mentioned before, as well as with the Satan - 22:22,23. Then it can also be anticipated that whenever the narrator uses the divine name "Y.", he does so only in those cases when Y.'s direct intervention into the actions of his Elohim (or his Mal'akh who are only two different kinds of revelation of his one messenger), is necessitated for any reason.
4. Only the Name "Y." Used by Balaam in the Prose Text

Balaam is the one to be tempted, and it is in the nature of a temptation that the person concerned should not know it. Therefore he thinks that it is Y. who speaks to him at the beginning of the narrative: 22:8, 13, 18, 19. Even after an Elohim has appeared to him (22:9), he cannot know that this is meant as a temptation; needless to say that this Elohim was indistinguishable from any other Elohim. Such revelations were common at those times, and many of them are found in the Genesis to the Patriarchs. Balaam may as well have been accustomed to revelations by an Elohim.

It is only after the Mal'akh Y. had revealed himself to him and told him explicitly that his task was to be an adversary, a satan (22:32), Balaam realizes that he is being tempted. Therefore, when meeting Balaq, Balaam, still under the impact of the almost fatal meeting with Y.'s messenger, says (22:38):

"The speech which (an) Elohim will put into my mouth, that shall I speak." The meaning of the change from "Y." to "Elohim" cannot have escaped Balaq's attention as is clearly shown in 23:27; he must have understood the implication very well, that Balaam's task had now become more difficult, if not altogether impossible. Nevertheless, both of them continue trying to carry out their common purpose.
5. The Temptation of Balaam as the Basic Assumption of the Whole Narrative

The suggested solution, namely that the basic idea of the narrative is the temptation of Balaam, the prophet and the magician-diviner, explains the whole structure of the narrative, its prose parts as well as the parables and their contents. Subsequently it will be shown that this is the main thought which governs almost every detail, included in, or omitted of, this highly dramatic narrative. The pericope is divided into the repeated temptations of Y. who tries Balaam not less that 6 times; 3 times before he arrives at Balaq's place (during the visit of the first delegation, 22:9-11; of the second delegation, 22:15-19; the trials (s) of the Malak Y., 22:22-35; (the, counted as 1), and another 3 times before the Balaam utters the first, second and third parable, 23:1-4, 13-15, 29-30. But each of Y.'s temptations, apart from the last (the sixth), is countered by an attempt of Balaam to act as a diviner (see above), which, of course, necessitates the repetition of another temptation. A final situation, as has been shown, is created by Balaam at 24:1. Thus that chapter, which consists of two prophetic utterances following closely each other, (24:2-9, 15-24), contains the denouement of the plot as well as of the questions raised.

However, there remains still the problem of the 25th chapter, whose incorporation or exclusion decisively affects the final appreciation of Balaam. If it is assumed to be a part of the Balaam Narrative, the outcome is exactly the opposite of that of ch. 24. But this does not affect the concept of temptation as such as the basis of the Balaam Narrative.
Notes to Chapter 9

61. See ch. 6 part 2.

62. Here we cannot agree with Grossmann (p. 332), who assumes the possibility of a real struggle between a god and a magician. It seems to us that his assumption is taken from the realm of saga and legend and transferred to Biblical narratives without taking into account the essential differences between these two kinds of literary material. For a similar critique see Loehr, op. cit., p. 88.

63. The classical description is the beginning of Job 2 (see next paragraph); cf. also 1 K 22:19-22 and Za 3:1-2. This view has been very well explained by B. Jacob, Genesis, Berlin 1934, p. 491-2, to Gen 2:11.

64. In the Bible, the conception of the Satan is that of one of the angels of Y., who is never be thought of as his adversary. For a very detailed discussion of the idea of the Satan, see: Ritkah Schaerl, Die Gestalt des Satan im Alten Testament, in: G. G. Jung, Symbolik des Geistes, Zuerich 1948, p. 153-319, especially p. 206-229. (The pertinent literature is found in this article). cf. also A.B. Davidson, The Theology of the OT, Edinburgh 1904, p. 300-306. - For the non-theological meaning of "satan" in the OT, cf. 18:29:4, 2 Sam 19:23, 1 Kings 5:18, 11:14, 23, 25. The closest parallel of the verb stn is found in Ps 71:13 and 109:20.

65. Thus, the moment of evil is somewhat taken out of Y. by this transfer, but, as a matter of course, there is no difference whatsoever in the final analysis. As F.M. Cross has shown in his article: The Council of Y. in Second Isaiah,
JNES 1952. the idea of a council of gods

can be traced back to older prototypes of Mesopotamian rel-

ingions.

66. Therefore translated in the Septuagint by "diabolēs," in

the Vulgate by "adversarē", then in English translations by "adversary".

67. Cf. Albright, from Stone Age etc., p. 346-8, 361-2 (Iranian

influence), 374-5, and 21-22 as to the Dead Sea Scrolls and

their influence on the NT.

68. Therefore the appellation "Mal'akah Y." expresses exactly the

essence of his task; cf. Ps 103:19-21.

69. Everywhere in the OT (with the exception of the second part of Daniel), cf. e.g. Gen 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24; Ex 14, 23;

Nu 20; Ju 2, 6, 13, especially 13:18.

70. The expression "Ben Elohim" in the singular is not found in the Bible — probably so as to avoid undesirable associations — and "Elohim" as a singular noun is used instead of it. The only exception would be "Bar Elshin" in Dan 3:25, explained there in v. 28 as: "His Mal'akah." But the setting of the chapter is the Babylonian court, and the words are put into the mouths of non-Israelites. For the expression "Ben Elohim" in non-Israelite religions, see art. "Eney Elim" in the Encyclopedia Targum to vol. 2, p. 172-4.

71. 22:22, 32. The stress is laid on the special task he has to fulfill. Therefore it is an appellation but not a name. The same use is found in the verses quoted in note 4 above.
Notes to Chapter III (cont’d)

72. Parallels in the narrower sense would then be the book of Jona, and 1 K 13; in the wider sense the life of any prophet evaluated against the divine commands he receives. For a final evaluation of Balaam, see at the end of this chapter. As to temptation as a standard of religious obedience and faithfulness, cf. Dt 8:2-6, 16, 13:3-5.

73. For the same reason, Gen 22:1 begins with the Ha-Elohim.


75. Not even mentioned by the very detailed analyses of Grossmann, Mowinckel and Rudolph; nor duly stressed by Gray p. 310-11.


77. The idea that the various divine names are intentionally used to design various manifestations of Y. has been much neglected on account of the prevalence of the hypothesis of various sources, especially J and P. But the distinctions made in the Balaam Pericope are found several times in the Bible.

1/ In Ju 6:11-24 and then v. 36-40: In the former verses, a Malakh Y. appears physically to Gideon (in v. 23, "Y." is short for "Malakh Y."); in the latter, he asks the divine messenger who had appeared to him for a sign. As he has disappeared, he is therefore called "ha-Elohim"; attention should be paid to the definite article, also found in v. 39.

2/ A "Malak Y." as a physically visible divine messenger appears in Gen 16:7-11 to Hagar; in v. 13, "Y." stands for "Malakh Y." In the parallel description in Gen 21:17-19, "Malak Elohim" (and "Elohim" for short) is used because she physically hears his voice "from heaven" (17).

3/ The comparison of Gen 17 with 18 and 19 is instructive. Ch. 17 opens with a human revelation, then continues with a vision of a divine revelation and therefore "Elohim". Ch. 18 begins exactly like ch. 17, but as the divine messengers physically visit Abraham and Lot, they are called either ( ) Malakhim (19:1,15) or, for short, "Y." (18:13, 20, 26, 22, 19:24, 27), or even "Anašim" because of their human appearance. Then (18:2, 19:10, 12, 16). Their message is indicated by 19:13 and 19:22. They are called either "Malakhim" 19:1, 15 or "Y." (short for "Malakh Y." f 18:13, 20, 26, 33, 19:24, 27) or even "Anašim" because of their human appearance (18:2, 19:10, 12, 16).

4/ In Ex 3:2, "Malakh Y." is used for the burning bush, but then "Elohim" is used for a prophetic vision, until "Y." himself
Notes to Chapter III (cont'd)

speaks to Moses.

5/ A clear case of identification of "Elohim" with a "Malakh" is found in Gen 48:15-16.

In other cases, however, when the presence of Y. himself is all-important, his visible manifestation is called "Elohim". Cf. Ex 13:17-22, 19:3,17,19, 24:10,11. The rule seems to be that the visible manifestation is always one 'grade' lower than the one experienced by vision; the 'grades' being: Y. - Elohim-Malakh Y. (-Malakh Elohim).

Now we do not claim to have here originated a new hypothesis to solve in the whole Pentateuch the problem of the various divine names, but we do claim to have solved it for the Balaam Narrative. We have likewise shown that the same principles are used in some other parts of the Pentateuch and the Book of Judges.

The subject is a very complex one and demands a thorough investigation. The sources hypothesis does not seem to have solved it. Anyway it is clear that the Bible does differentiate its use of divine names in one and the same text according to modes of manifestation and degrees of revelation. The neglect of this rather simple literary device has caused many misunderstandings, last not least of the Balaam Narrative.

78. See part #6 of this chapter.

79. "The only one who dealt seriously with this problem, trying at least to investigate the text at first without dividing it into sources was Baentsch in his commentary to Nu. According to his results, any analysis should start from the Hebrew text, since the different readings of Sam. and Septuagint resulted from their necessity to translate and interpret a difficult text.

"This use of "Elohim" is of course for many commentators ... a sign of the E source, without raising the question why E, who had for many chapters used "Y." (apart from 21:5), suddenly changes over to "Elohim.""

Baentsch rightfully draws attention to the fact that
Notes to Chapter III (cont'd)

the divine names are used here according to a certain plan. But then it turns out that certain parts of the narrative do not fit into this plan; which makes a division into sources possible. (Rudolph, p. 103, translated by me.)

It is exactly here that our work begins. The first point is the realization of the motif of temptation which underlies the whole narrative, from which follows that "Elohim", and not "Y.", had to be used by the narrator. This has not been seen by Baentsch not by Rudolph. (The common mistake is to divide the narrative mechanically into sources without trying to interpret it first.) But this is the key of the use of the divine names.

It was recognized by Rudolph that in the usage of the Bible, the foreigner as well as the Israelite who talks to a foreigner, use "Elohim", whereas the narrator himself can use the name "Y." (p. 105). The reason then adduced by Rudolph that Balaam had to use "Y." because the narrator wanted to stress that the blessing of Israel was caused by Y., is not valid for the prose text, and certainly not for the narrator's use of "Elohim". The only reasonable explanation is that Y. was also Balaam's god, and Balaam's "Y. my God" in 22:13 fits exactly into this scheme and must not be explained away.

30. Which would only confirm our assumption that Balaam was a prophet and had been known before as such. - The use of divine names in the parables is different; however, it will be dealt with thoroughly in part 62 of this chapter.
Notes to Chapter III (cont'd)

81. This rather unexpected change is of course noted by Balaam, who, of course, prefers not to comment on it at all at that moment, so as not to discourage Balaam even more, after all the difficulties which he has already had to bring Balaam to Maab. Throughout the rest of the narrative, Balaam continues to use the name of Y.; 23:3,12,26 "4:(1),13,13.

82. It is only after the second failure that Balaq begins to realize fully Balaam's first words at their first meeting (22:38).

83. Gressman (p. 319) and Mowinckel (p. 234), following Wellhausen (p. 109-110), assume that 22:36-41 is composed as follows: 26,38 and 40 belong to E, 37 and 39 to J, 41 to R. Rudolph (p. 104-6) assigns the whole of 22:36-41 to J, and thinks that "Elohim" in v. 38 is a parallel to v. 18, and read originally "Y. my God", and then amends it to "my God". But neither the division nor the emendation are convincing. Verses 36-41 present a continuous story with neither repetitions nor inconsistencies. Nor is the emendation probable, because the expression "my God" is not used elsewhere by Balaam. The question should be asked whether there is not something in the specific situation that might have caused a change of the divine name.

As far as questions of the methodology are here concerned, cf. the critical remarks of Loehrs (op.cit.), and also the more general critique of Albright (The Oracles etc. p. 207-8, 231) of the methods applied and results obtained by their predecessors.
Chapter 9, Part 4: The First and Second Delegation

1. The temptation of Balaam already begins with the arrival of Balaq's first delegation and their offer to him. Balaam as a prophet of Y. of course knows that "that people" (not called by its name, neither by the messengers nor by Balaam!) stands in a special relationship to Y., who will never permit anyone to curse them. Balaam therefore bound to announce immediately and unequivocally his refusal, including its reason, thus identifying himself entirely with what he clearly knew was the will of Y.

2. Already here Balaam shows himself dishonest. His mind is already set to carry out their demand because of the material reward and honour offered - even against the express wish of Y. The messengers are certainly prepared for a negative answer, knowing very well the situation and the difficulties of Balaam. Now by telling them to stay so that he could obtain Y.'s answer he already desecrates Y.'s name, his reputation, before them: as if Y.'s decision in this matter could be changed or even influenced by him. Thus he already degrades Y. to a Babylonian god from whom one can obtain the decision one expects. In Babylonia, when an omen was interpreted to indicate a negative answer of a god, the inquiry would be repeated for a second, even a third time, until an affirmative 'decision' of the god would be obtained (Meissner 243, 270).

3. In his answer (22:8) Balaam nevertheless promises to tell them exactly Y.'s answer, its full content and its true meaning (cf. Jer 42:4).
Thus he deliberately creates the impression that he does everything in his power, that he at least tries. His wavering position clearly shows itself already here: whether to act like a true prophet, according to his promise, or like a diviner, by his procrastination.

4. Now the continuation follows almost inevitably: a divine messenger, an Elohim, fulfilling the function of a satan, is immediately sent by Y. to try Balaam. The question now is: will Balaam at once rectify the wrong impression which Balaq's messengers got about Y.? Therefore the Elohim first puts a question before Balaam to find out his reaction. (So already the Midrash.) Balaam's answer is rather revealing. Realizing the intent of the question, he does not give himself away: "It is Balaq who wants to curse Israel; I am not involved at all in this." Nor does he ask expressly for permission to go. Yet by his answer he implies that he is ready to go - without saying so. The Elohim of course has seen through Balaam very well and therefore answers him in three short, pointed sentences, the first two negative commands, the third a statement of fact indicating the unchangeable will of Y. as to this matter:

Thus the Elohim has already prepared for Balaam, the exact words which he now can answer to the first delegation (even omitting the name "Israel" from his answer!).

5. The last doubts concerning Balaam's honesty are finally dispelled by his actual answer (22:13):
At first this sounds very good: Y. does not permit me, his prophet, to go with you. But the careful wording makes the messengers understand what B. really wants to say: it is Y. who does not permit me to go! - implying very clearly: "but I would if I only had his permission." Remembering the impression of Y. on the delegation already created by Balaam, his answer is very correctly understood by them: he does not want to go - not yet! - because the sum offered to him is not yet big enough. Once again, for them Y. has become a god like one of theirs, and Balaam his priest and financial agent, like a typical baru ready to curse an enemy for an appropriate sum of money. (See ch. 4 part 2 para. 1) Thus Y.'s name has not only been desecrated before the now returning messengers, but likewise before Balaq and the Moabites. And once again, the sequence of events inevitably follows.

6. Balaq, of course, is no fool. Realizing the true intent of Balaam, he dispatches another delegation, more numerous and weighty, with his authority to pay any price Balaam may ask for. (22:17a). Balaam understands that and fixes his price "a house full of silver and gold" (whatever this meant in actual money), adding however:

meaning: "I cannot do anything against the command of Y. my god." Thus Balaam continues to play his double game: he is now ready to go, but in case he cannot fulfill his promise he can always say that he had told them so, and pretend to then remain the faithful prophet of his God. He will do so
throughout the narrative, thus explaining away his failure. (Only after his 'conversion' in 24:1, 24:13 has attained a somewhat different meaning.) By telling the delegation to wait for another answer of his God, he is guilty of the same transgression as the first time - only more so. It was actually his last chance to terminate the whole affair in an honourable way. But it is easy to see that after having obtained the promise of so much money, Balaam is now even more unwilling to abandon the offer made to him.

7. The Elohim appears again to him. The test brings here only one sentence, certainly the last of a dialogue, which is easy to reconstruct (22:20):

This verse is difficult for two reasons:
1. The condition does not make sense: "If the men came to call you..." They certainly did.
2. Why did Y. change his decision after v. 12 (7b)? Did he really change his mind?

These difficulties have caused many unwarranted assumptions and should therefore be carefully examined.

To 1: פָּנֵי generally means to call someone, but can also mean to call someone from a feeling of affection or love. A good example of the latter is Hos 11:1:

Therefore the Elohim wants to say: if you are really convinced that you are invited because of your fame, that the whole matter is for your best, then you may go. But even if you decide to do so - after you have been told the will of Y.

-9
you will have to do, that is: to announce, whatever __ Y.'s messenger - tell you; implying ___ clearly already now that Balaam will not be able to curse the people, but will have to bless them.

To 2: The Elohim gives Balaam another chance to extricate himself at once from his dilemma. Even now, he has only to repeat v. 12 to them. But Balaam has already desecrated Y. before the first messengers, Balaq and the Moabites. Therefore if Balaam does not speak now as commanded by Y., thus submitting himself to his decision and clearly showing the true nature of Y., who decides and not Balaam, then this end can be achieved in a different way: Balaam, going with them, will have to consecrate Y.'s name anew before Balaq and the Moabites, who will then recognize the true character of Y. and his intentions, but likewise the character of Balaam his "prophet" (who says Y. is "my god" to the second delegation!), whose double dealing will then be exposed.

The freedom of decision is left to Balaam which is characteristic of the relation between Y. and his prophet; even between Y. and man in general in the Bible.
91. So far we have arrived at three conclusions. First, as to the problem of the various divine names; second, that B. stands between prophecy and divination; third, that Y. tempts B. as to his loyalty to him and his standing as a prophet. These conclusions are used as assumptions in our subsequent analysis of the B.N. (Parts 4-7 of this chapter).

92. For the Moabites, to be sure, G was not different from any other god of theirs or their cultural milieu. For them it was only the question whether B. was willing to pronounce the curse or not. They certainly would not share any of the fears and struggles B. had to experience during the dramatic development of events.

93. qesāmīm can here be taken as the customary payment a diviner would receive for his services rendered: Gray 329. It is mentioned when the messengers leave Moab, but not later, as of course one does not openly talk about money between gentlemen. Therefore it is later not mentioned anymore — but reappears as "a house full of silver and gold" in B's words to the second delegation.

94. Some commentators stress here B's faithfulness to his God, whereas others explain it the contrary way; none realizing the actual situation.
95. As well known, silver was more precious than gold in those times because it was more difficult to mine and to refine.

96. What did the dialogue contain? It is not hard to reconstruct: B. asked again for permission to go, as Balaq had sent a more urgent appeal. The Elohim refers back to his first answer. Nevertheless, B. pleads again. Then Elohim, realizing that B. has not yet learnt his lesson and cannot be convinced by him at present, permits him to go, but making his permission dependent upon a definite condition.

(Midrash:)

97. This is one of the strongest arguments for the composite character of the B.H., and also for the separation of 22:226-35. The wrong answer is given by Gray 331-332. Balaq is here only a means in the hand of Y. to try Balaam. He certainly is not justified in enticing B. to curse Israel (see below), but he is neither a leading character in this drama. He is the one who represents the ANE as it was at his time, acting as any other king would have acted in such a situation. Therefore the bad opinion of neither the Midrash nor Gray a.o. in comparing him to the Pharoah of the Exodus can be justified.
98. Attention should be drawn to another point that v. 20 b repeats v. 8a. The irony of course is that because B. had not kept his promise by his answer in v. 13b, which the de-
legation could not know, that he certainly will be given a chance to fulfill his promise at a later opportunity—which
he somehow himself prepares.

99. The answer of the Elohim began thus: "If .... they came etc." implying that he still had the choice of not to go, if he chose to give them an honest reply.

100. This is the intent of the second half of the Elohim's answer (see note 98). — This idea exactly explains the sub-
sequent development of the narrative. It is now possible to grasp its inner logic, the premises on which the whole nar-
rative is built. Therefore v. 20, correctly interpreted, proves to be a keystone to the construction of the dramatic plot.

Notes to Part 5:

101. Cf. chl 7 para. 3 — As our interpretation of this passage is very different from the generally accepted view, we found it necessary to present our views in a more detailed way.

102. For the variants of LXX and Sam, see part 1 of this chap-
ter. According to our conclusions there, we base our inter-
pretation on M.
103. Against this simple and rather expected sequence much has been written. Two examples will be sufficient. Gray 332 thinks that it was the belief of the early Hebrews that Y. frequently subjected people who had even unwittingly offended him to disaster. Greenstone 245: God was angry with him because B. did not divulge to the messengers the full import of the condition made by God. Greenstone then explains the Elohim's answer that B. might have inferred from it that God would tell him to bless Israel, but that it was not clearly indicated to him - which he did not tell the messengers. This explanation is based on a misunderstanding of v. 20.

104. Cf. e.g. Gen 22:5 - Besides, during such a long journey they do not have to be with him at every moment. Their task is to prepare meals, pitch the tent, take care of animals, etc. after a long day's journey.


106. The reason that v. 35 repeats v. 20 has again been misunderstood by almost all commentators. It is certainly no doubt. The words of the Elohim-Malakh are almost identical, and meant to be so, because the aim of the 'Intermezzo' was to inculcate this truth more sharply upon B's consciousness and conscience.

107. Attention should be paid to the double meaning of B's words: they can also mean that whatever Y. tells him (Cf. Jer 1:7) he will announce.
108. Realizing that Elohim stands in their way, which seems a good explanation because of the definite article.


110. 22:8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 22.

111. 23:3, 4, 5, 12, 16, 17, 26, 27; 24:1, 2.

112. Summing up the four ten-fold confrontations, the main subject of the narrative is brought out by the following arrangement:

1. 22:2 - 22a: Balaq's messengers - Balaam - Elohim (= Y.'s messenger)
2. 22:22b - 35a: Balaam - Balaam - Malakhi Y. (= Elohim)
3. 22:35b - 23:2: Balaq - Balaam
4. 23:3 - 24:2: Balaq + Balaam - Elohim + Y.

The effectiveness of the system is easy to see. It is even more effective when told, because such devices are liked particularly where narratives are more often told than read.

113. It is of course possible to discuss whether 22:22-35 once existed separately before it was assumedly incorporated into this narrative. In our view, such a discussion is irrelevant, because from its present integrated position within the narrative nothing can be learnt whether it once existed as a separate story. Within the B.M., it is fully subjected to the main thought of the plot, which is here to bring about a direct confrontation with B. so as to give him a last warning before his fateful decision to speak against the will of Y. before the Moabites.
114. The Malakh says that he came as B's adversary where the way became difficult, almost impassable (22:32). This is of course just another case of double meaning: your way has become impossible! Otherwise there would have been no point in mentioning such a trivial matter. B. understood this, as apparent from his answer: "on my way, i.e. on my way.

115. Almost all modern commentators regard the "speaking ass", and "God himself opening its mouth" as a piece of simple folklore and likewise a low, primitive degree of folk-religion. The most radical view is expressed by Gressmann, Mose und seine Zeit, Göttingen 1913, p. 325-7. According to Gressman the god is described as a wild demon who wants to kill B.; and all this although B. is innocent, not knowing the will of the god (sic!)...moral motifs... are strange to the god...who only intervenes because of Israel which is protected by him...as the god of B. is not Y. (sic!) The first storyteller talked in his great naivety much about "Y.", without thinking that other peoples have other gods. Only at a later period, when reflexive thinking developed, "Y." was substituted for by "Elohim", who unhesitatingly acts for Israel, as understood itself by the patriotic feeling of the Israelites. Also the persecution of B. by Y. became objectionable at a later time; therefore it was changed into "Malakh Y.", without changing the story itself, as if to free thus Y. from guilt. (sic!) The fact is very difficult to understand that the god does not murder B., although at the end of the scene B. is in his power...the god is the one deceived by a trick - not by B., but by the ass. (sic!)

Alas, Gressmann lacked the basic understanding of the plot as well as its premises. The lack of logic, and the many inconsistene-
cies in his own interpretation speak for themselves. The primitiveness imputed to the story is Gressmann's own invention.

Gressmann's view is nevertheless important because it was followed in this form or another by many commentators after him. What he failed to understand is the distinction between two facts: the existence of an originally primitive element, and the way this element is used in the present narrative. An originally primitive folkloristic element can of course easily be reconstructed from the speaking ass, its awareness of a physical phenomenon before its rider, its saving its rider before a sure death, etc. An entirely different matter, however, is the way these motifs are used in the present narrative. In our opinion, they are anything but primitive, but, rather on the contrary, extremely sophisticated. The pedagogic point was even realized by Gressmann op. cit. 323: "Only now B. realizes the strange behaviour of the animal; his eyes suddenly open, and he sees Y. (sic!) standing before him. The ass does not simply speak about the obstacle which is threatening her and does not at all draw his attention to Y., but behaves like a clever pedagogue who indirectly causes its master to arrive at this realization;...therefore it waits until Y. reveals himself to B. and lets him understand the situation." Here Gressman at least shows himself at his best. However the inconsistency between his latter and former interpretations still remain. For our interpretation, see the text.---

116. The demoniac dog "Balaq" of Agnon's famous novel "Tmol Shilshom" might be mentioned here.
117. Another dramatic irony is of course the sword with which B. would have liked to kill the ass, not realizing that at this moment just because of his thoughts, he may be killed by the sword of the M. But because of the ass, he is saved from sure death.
Chapter 9 Part 5: The Encounter between Balaam and the Malakh Y.: the Speaking Ass

1/ The main problems of 22:22-35 are these:

1. A "Malakh Y." appears only in this passage, as opposed to "Elohim" and "Y." everywhere else in the prose of the Balaam Narrative;
2. In this passage, which has only "Malakh Y.", "Y." appears twice;
3. The inconsistency between 22:22 and 22:20;
4. The popular character of this passage because of the physically visible Malakh and the speaking ass;
5. The princes of Moab are not mentioned in it (after 22:21), nor are his two servants;
6. The connection of this passage with the main narrative;
7. The necessity of this passage within the main motif of the plot.

2/ After this answer of the Elohim, Balaam's thoughts are not hard to follow: "Contrary to the first time, I have already obtained permission, even if limited by this condition." What he fails to realize is that by the clearly implied prohibition he has actually gained nothing. As a matter of course he decides to go. Now on his way, riding on his ass, he continues to think, and again his thoughts are easily followed: "So far, so good. And once I am there I may yet somehow obtain his final, unconditional approval. One has only to ask one's god several times until one obtains his favourable answer." (Which was the approach typical of
a bārū.) But now, at the third time, even the Elohim becomes angry with Balaam, of whom he expected more understanding of, and response to, the will of Y. As last means to convince Balaam of the futility of his plan, the Elohim therefore enforces a direct confrontation with him.

3/ To (5): As this passage shall narrate a direct, personal confrontation between Balaam and the Malakh Y., the people accompanying Balaam on his journey are of course not mentioned in it, nor are his two servants. Only a bad narrator would not have omitted them as their mentioning would distract from the main point he wanted to bring out.

4/ To (1), (6), and (7)

Balaam is now on his way, alone, deeply absorbed in his thoughts. The Elohim now stands in his way, physically visible to him, with his sword drawn in his hand to kill Balaam should he continue to disobey Y., as the punishment for such a prophet is death. This is the cause of the transition from "Elohim" to "Malakh Y.,” conditioned only by the motives of the narrative itself. Balaam does not see him because he does not think of Y. This non-seeing is later admitted by Balaam to have been his offence (22:34), which can only be explained that he had to 'see', to 'visualize' before him the presence of Y., as his prophet. The double meaning of 'to see' is here the point of the narrative. In other words, the Elohim is angry with Balaam because of his plans to circumvene his express commands and will. Therefore he tries Balaam now for the third (and last) time, and even here
three times. The irony is clear: how could it happen that you did not see me when even your ass realized my presence and thus saved you!? Meaning, of course: do you really think that you can outwit me? Having been taught this lesson, Balaam now realizes his utter dependency on Y., and the futility of his plan, so that he had better return. **But now the Elohim** commands him to finish his message on which he will have to announce Y.'s word, and not his own. Therefore, still under the immediate shock of this encounter with the Elohim, Balaam tells Balaq at once (22:38) that whatever the Elohim will force him to say he must say; thus already preparing 23:5,16; also Balaq says therefore "Elohim" after the second unsuccessful attempt at 23:6,17.

As to the connection of this "intermezzo" with the main body of the narrative, it is quite revealing to note that in that in the former the Malakh Y. and Balaam are each mentioned 10 times, and so are Elohim and Y.; likewise in the continuation, 22:35b-23:2 (until the end of the preparation for the first encounter), Balaam and Balaq are mentioned 10 times, always together; and then again, between Balaam (and Balaq) and the Elohim (and Y.) from 23:3 to 24:2, before Balaam's conversion to prophecy. The intention of this simple and effective literary device, even more effective when the narrative, as in ancient times, was heard and not read, is this: by this double confrontation of Balaam his position has become quite evident - between Y. (and his messengers) and Balaq (and his messengers). This is an additional proof that the "intermezzo" is an integral part of...
the narrative. Its main intention was the projection of the encounter between the Elohim and Balaam on a visible, physical plane, because the protagonist of the drama, the prophet Balaam, had become such a schemer and fool that only a drastic lesson was liable to convince him of his folly.

To (2)

5. The narrator used "Y." only for Y's direct intervention into the actions of his Elohim who now appears as his Malakh. In verses 22-27, the Malakh tries unsuccessfully to arrest Balaam's attention by the peculiar behaviour of his ass. Balaam, not suspecting anything, hits her three times; thus the Malakh has now tried him for three times.7 Now when Balaam, still thinking of how to achieve his plan against the will of Y., hits his ass for the third time his time is up and the Malakh, according to his instruction, wants to kill him (the drawn sword was already mentioned in v. 23). But precisely at this moment Y., "slow to anger", intervenes, as he wants Balaam to repent but does not want his death (Ez 18:27-28). Therefore he lets Balaam's ass speak to him in such a way that Y. reveals to him his own presence, the presence of his Malakh. Thus the two interventions of Y. are actually for one purpose. From the words of the Malakh to Balaam it has now become quite clear to Balaam — as well as to the reader — that he has been tempted — and failed, and that his play is now up; he cannot succeed against Y., and should he nevertheless try, his punishment will be death.
6. Most commentators regard the speaking ass as a primitive element in the narrative. But is it actually necessary to assume that the ass spoke human words? To arrive at a proper understanding, the aim of the narrator should be clarified at first, and then one has to ask oneself with which psychological and literary means he could attain it. Now the aim of this passage is doubtlessly ironical and pedagogical. The latter is simple: I, Y. always 'see' you and know perfectly what you are scheming against me - even if and when you do not realize it. I shall stand in your way as long as you do not want to go in my way.

7. But why was it necessary to introduce the speaking ass? The only parallel in the tense is the speaking serpent in Gen. 3. It seems that the intention there can only be psychological: the serpent represents the natural desire, the animal instinct, which the woman, and man in general, has in common with it, (the snake was chosen there because of its 'shyness', the way it appears to man,) as opposed to the divine element in man, represented there by the divine command. Now it is an old literary technique of all times and places, from Aesop to Arabian Nights to Kafka, to use animals for representation of human characters, especially to point out human foibles. Moreover, all storytellers like to delineate psychological processes within their human characters by describing physical events. The inference is then left to the reader, which always is one of the more rewarding aspects of reading a good story.
8. The psychological effect is then the main point. Here, the ass, which Balaam rides, is used for this purpose. It has been his steady companion for the last days or weeks. Now the five senses are common to man and beast, even understanding, although to a various extent; but speech is something specifically human. Therefore, a very effective means to point out the quasi-equality between them is the superiority of the 'speaking' ass which sees the Malakh. Balaam, the prophet, whose prophetic faculty elevates him above his fellowmen must hear from his own ass such a rebuke as to his unjust behavior against her, because she saw and realized the meaning of what she saw, but he, who had to remember the double meaning of seeing here, did not.

9. Attention should be paid to the fact that the dialogue between the ass and Balaam could have taken place entirely in the mind of Balaam without the ass 'speaking' even a single word. The ass then 'speaks' nonetheless to Balaam, who pays attention to the strange behavior of his ass, or, as a human being, feels himself spoken to by his ass. Man, after all, thinks in words. Moreover, one has to ask oneself which effect would be the stronger one: whether a talk in words actually spoken by the ass and Balaam, or a dialogue, the talk between a person and himself, a person thinking aloud, which causes him to arrive at a new realization is no doubt the better one, is psychologically more convincing.

From the literary point of view, the ancient narrator preferred to put the words into the mouth of the ass: the simple person would understand it his own way, the sophisticated and
the wise one would ask himself these questions and doubtlessly
arrive at the same conclusions. 50 or
60 years ago, ANE man was supposed to be rather backward and
primitive. From what is today known especially of Sumerian
and Akkadian wisdom literature, it appears that these people
were rather sophisticated and understood very well the irony
of such a situation, and interpreted it not differently from
our suggestion. After all, animals acting like human beings
in a story is not a modern invention.

10. As shown, Balaam riding on his ass was deeply ab-
sorbed in his thoughts how to achieve his goal against the
will of Y. The outward event of the strange behaviour of
the ass must therefore cause him to switch his attention to
focus upon the physical world around him, which disturbs the
stream of his thoughts, until he realizes that it is exactly
this which Y. wanted from the beginning, because he knew his
thoughts. If the ass had physically spoken, it would have
just said: "Do you not see the Malakh standing before us?"
The psychological explanation shows clearly what the narrator
had in his mind: the situation created by the strange behaviour
of the animal was to cause Balaam to change the train of his
thoughts, to lead him to repent his former intentions.
This effect is achieved by the speaking ass, as admitted by
Balaam at first to his ass (at the end of v. 30), then to the
Malakh Y.

Summary

10. This encounter is an inseparable part of the narrative,
whose inner development demanded such a continuation. There
exists no inconsistency between v. 22 and 20, and the transition from 'Elahim' to 'Malakh Y' is conditioned through the necessity of the physical nature of the third. The intervention of Y. to check his overzealous Malakh, giving Balaam another change, is in keeping with Y.'s character throughout the Bible as a god who does not want his creatures to perish, but to repent and to live, even his unfaithful prophet. The speaking of the ass has been shown to be an intentional projection of Balaam's own thoughts, and the ass itself brings out in full the irony of the situation. Finally, the encounter is connected with the preceding as well as with the following passage of the narrative by the four times ten encounters (between Balaam and the Malakh, and then between Balaam and Balaq), showing exactly the inner tension, the polarity, of Balaam, and with it the main motif of the whole narrative.
5. The Connection between the Prose Narrative

1. The continuation of the narrative is conditioned again by its inner development. Balaam, because he acted as he did, must now announce Y.'s words before Balaq, his messengers, and his people, in order to correct the wrong impression which they had received of Y. because of Balaam's machinations. As he tries again to receive Y.'s permission to curse the people, at the first and second encounter with Elohim, Y. has to force him to say what he, Y., wants to be said, exactly as Balaam had been warned. Characteristically the narrator used the same expression in 23:5 and 16, which was already used by Balaam when talking about his task to Balaq in 22:38 to prepare himself an excuse if he should fail. 

This is as if somehow Balaam felt that he could not accomplish what he so desperately wished - but yet he tried, having no choice left to him. From a man in such a desperate situation, the least one can expect is clear, rational thought and action. Those now present at Balaam's first attempt to curse Israel included of course the messengers of the first delegation (in both 23:6 and 22:8,14 the same expression شَرْكُ يَوْمُ مَوْعِدِ يَوْمِ الْيَعْرَبُ is used), who must have been struck by the first prophecy (here to be preferred to "Oracle") when comparing it to Balaam's first answer. Besides, the first prophecy constitutes the answer which Balaam should have given to the first messengers, after he had not given them the answer suggested to him by the Elohim (22:12). 

Cf. 23:7-10 to...
overlooked by the commentators, particularly the modern ones.

3. The irony in each case cannot have been lost on the Moabites present, nor on Balaam who thus was forced to re-establish the reputation of Y. before them. Thus Balaam's former statements proved to be true - but, ironically in exactly the opposite way from the intentional double talk of Balaam who had tried to present Y. as a typical ANE god.

This mutual relationship between the prophecies (oracles) and the prose narrative is a decisive proof for the unity of the narrative.

4. Once Balaam met Balaq, he becomes entirely absorbed in their common undertaking - in spite of Balaam's statement in 22:38 - as indicated by the stylistic device of mentioning the names of Balaam and Balaq ten times together. It is as if Balaam had forgotten altogether his being a prophet, even all that had happened to him until now. His new surroundings, his talks with Balaq, the honour paid to him, all these doubtlessly influenced his endeavour to show what was expected from him, which was almost taken as granted. And above all - the material reward allured him more than anything else.

5. The altars and the sacrifices, as already proved, conform exactly to the ritual of the bârû, yet within the context of the narrative, an additional motif becomes apparent: they were meant to demonstrate before the Moabites
the importance of Y, as Balaam's words to the Elohim clearly suggest (23:4) - as the Elohim had not noticed them! Balaam does not dare to say more; the Elohim has perfectly understood.

6. The Elohim appears to Balaam as the temptation of Balaam continues, as long as he does not (yet) announce intentionally and consciously the word of Y. Therefore the Elohim does not even deign to answer him, but forces him, which is here the meaning of  אַלְכָּה אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַlְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַlְכָּh אַלְכָּh אַלְc

to announce Y.'s word. The change from "Elohim" to "Y." (23:5) was necessary because the narrator, had to state here that "וּלְךָ", forced him to speak, as Balaam has to announce "the word of Y." before Balaq and the assembled people. Our explanation of the enforced speech of Balaam is supported by v. 5b: "Go back to Balaq and thus you shall speak!" - exactly these words, no more and no less.

7. As the first attempt has failed, another place has to be chosen (see ch. 4), and the same procedure is repeated. Therefore everything is reported as concisely as possible, and the dialogue is limited to the appearance and final answer of Y., who again forces Balaam to announce his (Y.'s) words. To stress the last point, no word is omitted here (v. 16). Thus Balaam has been tempted again - and has failed again. His two divinatory attempts are in accordance with אַלְכָּה אַלְc in 24:1.

After two failures, a third - and final - attempt has to be made: v. 27-30.
8. The great change within Balaam's mind takes place before the third oracle. To the reasons for this change (see ch. 4), one more has here to be added: the third attempt to convince Y. of cursing his people may bring death to him. (Cf 22:22, 32-33) Whichever the decisive factor of this change was, it is quite clear that the 3rd and 4th oracle are pronounced by Balaam upon whom now the divine spirit rests, speaking as a prophet. This is the reason for the different introductions; and herewith all the arguments against a different authorship have become untenable. 

9. The contents of the third prophecy (oracle) continues and develops two motifs of the first and second prophecy, namely the peculiar relationship between Y. and Israel, his people, and its military strength. and primarily seem to describe the tents of Israel, fitting the present situation of the Israelites near the Jordan. However, these two words can equally allude to the Tabernacle in their midst. The double meaning is after all a favourite literary device.
in poetry and prophetic speech. The prophecy then elaborates on their future greatness as kingdom. The people, continuing their liberation by Y., will with his-or their-strength smash their enemies. The prophecy ends with the formula, rather ominous in this context, that Y. will reward or retribute (this clearly implied) measure for measure to those who bless, or curse, Israel. It is only now that it has arrived at the recognition of his true task, and his formulation of it here refers back to that of the Malakh in 22:35 (וַיהִי וַיֲנֵל וְיָנֵל וְיָנֵל וְיָנֵל) and, finally, their first meeting in 22:8, where he promised them to tell them exactly Y.'s word (וַיְנֵל וְיָנֵל וְיָנֵל וְיָנֵל) which he now finally does.

This prophecy is, of course, felt as a crowning insult to Balaq, who, still believing in Balaam's divine potency, which he had just witnessed, felt himself deceived: instead of one expected curse, no fewer than three — the number so important in the diviner's ritual — blessings of Y., the god of Israel! Therefore now — the biting irony: "Your god did not let you curse!" — Balaq now refers back to 22:13-14, meaning: you did not want to do it, you deceived me! Now Balaam, for the first time, speaks up as a prophet: verse 13 is not any more a lame excuse like 23:12, where he says that he must do what Y. tells him. Now for the first time he says that no amount of money offered to him can induce him to transgress Y.'s command, but that which Y. speaks he will speak.
10. As Balaam does not expect any reiteration, he adds another prophecy (oracle) introduced (v. 15-16) like the third (v. 3-4). Its theme is the future greatness of Israel and its victories over its enemies, beginning with Moab. Others are Edom and Amalek, both well-known for their age-old enmity and rivalry of Israel. The Kenites lived among the Amalekites at the time of Saul (1 Sam 15:6). The prophecy concludes with Ashur to conquer the Kenites; but Ashur, together with (their allies?) Eber, are to be conquered in turn by navies from Kittim, the ancient name for Cyprus (also used in a wider sense for the shores of the Greek islands).

The impact of the fourth prophecy for Balaq and his audience must have been stunning. They certainly believed in the popular notion that an unjust curse would fall back on his utterer. As Balaq and his people had tried to curse Israel, their own intended curse would fall back on future generations of Moabites, who well might preserve a memory of them, their forefathers, who had caused their curse.

The narrative laconically ends that Balaam went home, and Balaq went his way. There was just nothing more to be said between them.

11%. In their contents, the 3rd and 4th oracle continue the thoughts of the 1st and 2nd oracle, thus constituting a logical, unified train of thoughts.

Thus we have proved that there exists a very close connection between the prophecies (oracles) and the prose narrative of the Balaam Pericope. The main motif of the Pericope, namely the suspension of Balaam between prophecy
and divination and therefore Balaam's trial by Y. constitutes this connection. Only by this interpretation both the prose text and the prophecies (oracles) become meaningful. By their numerous mutual references they form a closely-knit unit governed by one main thought logically developed and carried out with the full narratory and dramatic art of the ancient composer in a rather short composition of about 90 verses.
121. We have found it necessary to write also this part in a more detailed way because this connection is generally not admitted.

122. Ch. 5 para. 4.

123. 23:19-20: Y's decision, unlike man's is not to be changed; 23:21-24 states the reason for Y's decision: his special relationship with Israel caused by its morality (21a), its acceptance of Y. as their king (21b) because he liberated them from Egypt (22), and makes his works known to them but not by divination (23); finally (24), a threat against its enemies.

124. There is nothing else to explain the course taken by B. after the threatening encounter with the Malakh. Therefore avarice must have been the decisive factor of B's actions.


126. "Malkō" is here an abstract noun, Albright, Oracles 218 n. 70. — Agag is probably here a royal title of the Amalekites. Cf. 1 Sam 15:32.

127. For a full appreciation of B's change, it should be added that in 24:13 he says — for the first time! — that for no price
he will act as a diviner (who curses for money, an ANE practice, as shown), but only as a loyal prophet of Y., announcing his word. Moreover, $\text{\textit{העבשהו}}$ of 22:18 have been changed into $\text{\textit{העבשהו}}$ : B. has become conscious of the ethical implications of his actions by his 'conversion'.

128. 23:12 refers back to 22:38: their expressions are identical; the same is the case with 23:26 in relation to 22:20.


130. As to the historical allusions, see ch. 10 part 3.

131. See ch. 5 para. 7 and ch. 1 part 1, para. 5.

132. For the proofs, see ch. 5, para. 6 and 7.

125. Wellhausen, Composition 579, assigns ch. 23 to J and 24 to E. Gray 312-13 however assigns 23 to E and 24 to J. Mowinckel op. cit. 233-5 assigns the first and second oracle to E, the third and fourth to J. Driver, Introduction 1913, 66-67, leaves the question undecided.
Chapter 9 Part 7: The Baal Peor Incident

It nevertheless seems that the Balaam Narrative has a continuation. The Torah relates after it the incident with the Moabite women in ch. 25. The transgression of Israel in worshipping the Baal Peor is related here very concisely (in only 9 verses). The people came into contact with one of the local Baal shrines with its orgiastic forms of worship, and as a punishment by Y., a large number of Israelites, mainly of the tribe of Simeon, died there from a plague. It was one of the most serious crimes committed by the Israelites as regarded by the Torah, and it is mentioned in the Deuteronomy as a deterrent example of what may happen to the people in Canaan (Dt 4:3-4, 7:1-5, probably also 29:15-20). It can be compared in its seriousness to the worship of the Golden Calf of the first generation.

The problem is simple: is there any connection between this episode and the Balaam Narrative? Did then Balaam remain a prophet of Y. or did he revert to be a diviner advising Balaq to alienate the Israelites by the Baal worship, from their god? Nu 25, does not contain any direct reference to Nu 22-24. Therefore most modern commentators claimed that there exists no connection, and that the sequence is only chronological. The alternative explanation connects them, since the Moabites succeeded in carrying out their plan, because Y. strikes Israel with a plague. Thus Balaq succeeded in bringing upon them almost total destruction (25:11).
in addition to 

all key words.

Here, unlike before the first and second oracle, the curse of Balaam became efficacious as the Israelites were the transgressors, (25:1), although the initiative was taken by the Moabite (and Midianite) women. 145

(2) In the war later against Midian, Balaam ben Beor was killed (31:8). But what did he, whose dwelling-place was Pitru on the Euphrates (22:5), do among the Midianites after he had already returned to his place (24:25)? The answer is that Balaam, angry because of the honour and money which had eluded him, and the opportunity he had missed, as he then felt, and because of his fame and reputation as a diviner which had now received their death-blow, later changed his mind once again, reverting to his former approach and intentions. Therefore he tried with all available means to destroy Israel. Therefore he returned to the Moabites and Midianites, whom he gave this advice, which they then successfully carried out. The Israelite war of revenge was directed against the Midianites, probably because they were the more active participants in this episode (see immediately below). All this fits in perfectly with the assumption that Balaam stayed with the Midianites. 146

(3) After the war against the Midianites, the Midianite girls and women were blamed for the Baal Peor Incident (31:8), instigated by Balaam - " 

, "by the advice of Balaam" (so already One), as a result of which the Israelites were struck with the plague. This intention
is even more stressed by the repetition of 1ב, which can also mean "matter": 1ב. This is the exact antithesis to Nu 22:8 and 24:13: The "Word" of Balaam, now identical with the "Word" of Peor, against the word of ש Y.: Why is Balaam not mentioned by his name in connection with the Baal Peor Incident in ch. 25:8? According to 31:8, this fact was well-known to Moses and the Israelites? A probable answer is that Balaam's role was not yet known when the incident happened at Shittim, and therefore Balaam's name was not mentioned. Moreover, by mentioning it the people might have thought that Balaam had finally succeeded in over- coming Y. But the Pentateuch was interesting in stressing the grave crime of the Israelites with its possible far-reaching consequences for their future conquest, namely their possible succumbing to Canaanite religion. Thus the destruction of the Midianites foreshadows the destruction of the Canaanites because of their dangerous contagious religious practices. The inclusion of the Balaam's name would have justified the transgression of the Israelites, (as it was regarded by the Pentateuch). 

(4) An additional proof is the negative attitude of the Bible towards Balaam everywhere else. The view of Dt 23:5-6 about Balaam is decidedly disparaging; the same holds true for Jos 13:22, 24:9-10, and Neh 13:16. Mal 6:2-8 expresses the basic difference between Moses, Aaron and Miriam the prophetic leaders as messengers of Y.
and Balaam the messenger of Balaq. As Shittim is mentioned immediately after Balaam, it appears that a connection between them is implied: the contrast between Israelite and Canaanite religion is elaborated there (to verse 8).

**Conclusions:**

As all the later quotations about Balaam in the Bible are adverse, but on the other hand, at the end of Nu 22-24 Balaam behaves and acts like a prophet of Yhwh, the conclusion can only be that Balaam was held responsible for the Baal Peor Incident and judged according to his final stand. There is nothing in these later quotations to suggest a gradual change of opinion about Balaam because foreign prophecy of Yhwh had become unacceptable in later Israel. The struggles within Balaam's personality are evident from Nu 22-24, and Nu 25 is the final chapter of his drama: Balaam the prophet ultimately became Balaam the diviner.
141. *Ps 106:28 has also*

142. Gray 418-9, Rudolph 130; most follow Gray by regarding Nu 31a a late Midrash. However, Wellhausen 580-1 still assumed its connection with a story about Balaam. Against the opinion to regard Nu 31 as late see the judicious arguments of M.Z. Segal, Massoret u - Biggoret, Jerusalem 1957, 103.

143. *hōqa'ah* is still difficult, see Gray 383 and Greenstone 276; it has been rendered by "impalement" in the new JPS translation.

144. For the death penalty Cf. Ex 32:27 to Nu 25:5.

145. The Moabites and Midianites appear in this account together: Cf. 25:4, 6, 14, 17, 18. It does not make sense to correct "Moab" of 25:1 into "Midian": Rudolph, Der Elohist 128. The incident took place in Moab, and apparently local inhabitants together with Midianite women took part in the incident, which is understandable particularly after 22:47.

146. Another factor might have been that the Israelites were not permitted even in this case to make war against the Moabites, although this is nowhere stated.

147. For 1232 = by the word/advice of, Cf. 25:4, 17:6, 1K 12:6, Jer 44:26.

148. These associations were more easily present in the mind of the people who heard these narratives.
149. It is irrespective whether Dt is early or late: this was the opinion ascribed to Moses. It is today accepted by most commentators that even if Dt was written down late it contains much earlier material, especially its historical sources, as e.g. Dt 2.

150. The generally accepted explanation (see e.g. Margolis to this verse) is that the verse alludes to the fact that Y brought the Israelites into Canaan. But within the contrast of Isr. and Can. religion which is the subject of these verses it contains also an implied reference to Canaanite religious practices as performed by the Israelites for which both places had become infamous. For Gilgal Cf. Am 4:4-5, Hos 4:15, 9:15, 12:12. The double meaning would make excellent sense: "See what I have done to you, but what you did to me!"

151. The struggles within of B.'s personality are evident from Nu 22-24, and Nu 25

151. Gray 3 20 a.o.
Chapter 10: Results and Conclusions

Part 1: Balaam, the Prophet and Diviner

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Chapter 10 Part 1

Balaam, the Prophet and Diviner

1. The Main Theme of the Balaam Narrative

There is one central idea about which the Balaam Narrative was written: the temptation of Balaam, the prophet of Y., by Y. This is brought out by 22:8 and its seven repetitions throughout the whole chain of events. The narrative develops according to the vicissitudes of the inner struggle of Balaam whose position is an intermediate one between prophecy and divination, between Y. and his servants and Balaq and his servants.

2. The Unity of the Balaam Narrative and Chapter 25

The essential unity of the Balaam Narrative is based solely on this idea which underlies its development, accounts for all its details and determines its outcome. Not ch. 24, but 25 is the dénouement of the drama. Its connection with Nu 22-24 is attested by various stylistic means, apart from the testimony of the Pentateuch itself (25:18, 31:16), and other quotations in the Bible.

3. The 'Intermezzo' of the Malakh Y. and the Speaking Ass

It is the 'Intermezzo' which more than any other part of the narrative clearly reveals the essential motif of Balaam's temptation by Y. It is therefore a necessary and integral part of the narrative, whose aim is to warn Balaam for a last time by a physical confrontation with Y.'s messenger. The temptation is then extended by the direct intervention of Y. The 'Intermezzo'
is firmly connected with both the preceding and following parts of the narrative by literary devices, especially by the tenfold mentioning of Balaam and Balaam's messengers, of Balaam and the Malakh Y., and then of Balaam and Balaq, and finally between Balaam (and Balaq) and Elohim (and Y.): all of which clearly point to the main theme of the narrative.

4. **The Variations of the Divine Names**

   a/ The differences among M, Sam and LXX, are shown to have originated in a single 'Vorlage' identical with M. The variations of Sam and LXX are due to their exegetical difficulties. Thus M has the most reliable text.

   b/ In M, the divine names are used by the narrator according to pre-conceived systematic principles which can be demonstrated, and which are likewise used in other parts of the Bible, especially in the Pentateuch and Book of Judges.

   c/ In the prose narrative, "Elohim", "Malak Y." and Y. are used according to the requirements of the execution of the temptation; "Elohim" and "Malakh Y." stand for two manifestations on different planes of reality of the divine messenger, the satan. The differences between them are only conditioned by the inner development of the narrative itself.

   d/ In poetic style of the prophecies (oracles), mainly "El" is used in keeping with the ancient Canaanite - Ugaritic (NW Semitic) literary tradition, which also survived elsewhere in the Bible, especially in the Psalms; the same holds true for the use of other divine epithets, as "Elyon" and "Shadday".
5. The Four Prophecies (Oracles) within the Prose Narrative

a/ They are actually prophecies and as such integral parts of the narrative, since they motivate the decisions of Y. because of his relationship to Israel. The thematic and logical sequence of the plot depends upon them. Their content is the intimate relationship between Y. and Israel, based upon Israel's ethical qualities, and their acceptance of Y. as their divine king, who protects them, blesses them and punishes their unjust enemies. Moreover, the first and second prophecy constitute the answers which Balaam should have given to Balag's messengers. The narrative which centers around the intended curse and the actual blessing would be absolutely meaningless without them.

b/ The differences between the first two and the last two prophecies (oracles) are conditioned by the inner development of Balaam who reverts from prophet-turned-diviner to prophet before the third prophecy (oracle). Therefore only the last two have prophetic introductions (proved by 2 Sam 23:1ff) but not the first two, in which Y. forces Balaam to bless Israel against his will.

6. The Narrative about Balaam

By our proofs and method of interpretation we believe to have substantiated our assumption that the narrative about Balaam is a monolithic composition of high dramatic tension, executed in a masterful way, by means of stylistic and narrative devices well-known from other parts of the Bible. Its concepts about Y. are solely those of Biblical theology. The divinatory background
of Balaam has been authenticated from various ANE sources. The drama of Balaam, who is torn between prophecy and divination, has been made convincing by the narrative.

1. The position of the Balaam Narrative within the Pentateuch and the problem of its date and historicity will be dealt with in the two subsequent parts of this chapter.
Chapter 10 Part 2

2. The Balaam Narrative within the Book of Numbers
and the Pentateuch.

1. The Problem

Apparently there is no outward connection between the Balaam Narrative and the events reported about the Israelites in the Book of Numbers. Even the episode at Shittim could have been written without going to such a length about Balaam. If there exists any connection, it has to be found in something else. After our study of Balaam, the idea of a comparison with Moses almost suggests itself. It may have been behind Dt 18:9-15; Nu 6:4-5 mentions Balaam right after Moses, Aaron and Miriam. The comparison can be limited here to Moses, the more important of the three (Nu 12).

2. The Comparison with Moses

Moses is vividly described in the Books of Exodus and Numbers. In the various events related about him, his personal achievements are tremendous. In spite of all the difficult situations which he had to (face) encounter - or perhaps just because of them - he finally emerges as a very great man, leader, and prophet. His extremely grave transgression with its ensuing verdict of his death was told in Nu 20. Thus the biography/picture of Moses already attained some finality before the events of the Balaam Narrative.

Contrary to Balaam, Moses never tries to exploit his priestly leader of the people for personal purposes. The famous statement about the modesty of his character (Nu 12:3) certainly reflects the view of his contemporaries. Ex 2 tells
about the young Moses fighting for justice. His greatest
task, the liberation of the enslaved Israelites from Egypt,
called forth for a strong leader, ready to take up the cause
of a people before an imperial ruler.

Because of his unique tasks and position as a religious-
political leader, teaching his people new laws and precepts,
his reputation must have been great. The superiority of his
prophetic status is clearly brought out in Nu 12:6-8. Never-
theless he is not jealous of other prophets, as shown in
Nu 11:28-29 where he expresses the wish that "all Y.'s people
were prophets, that Y. put his spirit upon them." According
to his own words he acts as Y.'s messenger, and as such he
is accepted by the Israelites# 3 (Ex 4:29-31), and finally
even by Pharaoh (Ex 12:31-32). When he has to justify his
actions, he does so for the same reason (Nu 16:28). He even
commits his serious transgression (Nu 20:1-13) while trying
to alleviate a hard situation of the people. The climax of
prophetic efficacy he reached when he twice intervened for
his people to save them from the divine wrath (Ex 32; Nu 14).
Moses, realizing to which extent the Israelites had succumbed
to Canaanite practices and worship (Ex 32:7) tried to re-
educate them to the worship of Y. (Ex 34:13-26).

How does Balaam compare with Moses? Balaam tried to
exploit his prestige as a prophet of Y. for his personal gain.
Realizing his unique position and reputation, he demanded a
high price for his service - to curse the Israelites in Y.'s
name. The final effort of his endeavours, to induce them to
abandon Y. their god for Canaanite worship, is the crowning
effect of his achievements. It is this last act which shows the actual character of Balaam: the prophet of Y, who has turned into a criminal (at least in the view of the Pentateuch).

3. The Question of a Prophet and Lawgiver outside Israel

The personality of Moses as a man and prophet reveals the reason for his having been chosen as a leader; the features of Balaam in the same field make it abundantly clear why such a man could never have become a man to instill into a people a moral law, to give them a codex of commandments similar to those found in the Pentateuch. After all, whatever Moses did for Israel could have been done likewise by Balaam for his people. The Israelites must have asked themselves why the laws of the Pentateuch were given only to them and the Balaam Narrative provides an answer. The personality of Balaam constitutes the greatest possible contrast to that of Moses because both of them possessed the prophetic gift of Y, to an extremely high degree. And finally, the prophetic personality of Moses attains a new dimension, certainly a very significant one, by the success and failure of Balaam, the prophet and qosem. It was for these reasons that the Balaam Narrative was included into the Pentateuch.
11. This has already been realized by most commentators.

12. For purpose, it/irrelevant whether these statements of the Pent. reflect contemporary or later traditions.

12a. Ex 32 and, to a lesser degree, Nu 12 brings out clearly why Moses, the younger brother, was chosen as Israel's leader, and not Aaron, his elder brother.

13. This point was already clearly seen by the Midrah: see Bamidbar Rabba, beginning of the "Balaq" pericope.

14. Sifrey to Dt 34:10.

15. According to our conclusions, this subject has now to be investigated from an entirely new aspect.

16. The validity of our comparison may rightfully be questioned. We are here not concerned with the critical and historical evaluation of the Pent. Taking its present form we are solely interested to fit the B.N.into the Pent. For this purpose it is irrelevant if the present form of the Pent. is final for a long and complex development, or original and early. We do not profess to be able to go beyond its present state to construct sources, particularly as theories about them are in a steady state of change. Thus our question boils down to this: What is the position of the B.N.within the Pent. both in its present form. As we believe literary as well as theological to have demonstrated the/unity of the Balaam Narrative, we are certainly permitted to take also the Pent. as such for the sake
our comparison, perhaps only as a working hypothesis, as no better one is available at present. But because we think the comparison shown by us makes sense, it may at least be argued that the Balaam Narrative was incorporated into the Book of Numbers and the Pent. when they already were in their present condition. We do not believe that it is possible to make a comparison on any other basis.
Chapter 10 Part 3

and the Historicity

3. The Date of the Balaam Narrative

1. The Problems Involved

The following questions have to be answered here:

1. Does the Balaam Narrative reflect an actual historical situation, or is it only a popular story? Or does a later popular story reflect an earlier historical situation?

2. When was the Balaam Narrative written down for the first time, which further developments did it undergo, and when did its final redaction take place?

For answers to both questions, the following data have to be reviewed:

a/ geographical and historical allusions;

b/ linguistic features: the lexicographical use and the style of the parables; the style of the prose narrative;

c/ the actuality of its main problem: prophecy against divination;

d/ Biblical references outside the Balaam Narrative;

e/ concepts and views of the Balaam Narrative;

f/ extrabiblical material.

A remark about the history of the exegesis of the Balaam Narrative has to be made first. For the older, pre-critical approach, Biblical narratives were regarded as pure and simple history. The critical approach of especially the Wellhausen school, working on definite theories how the Biblical books must have come into being, destroyed not only the belief in their historicity, but in the reliability of the Masoretic text. But Wellhausen (and his followers) had to work almost without very little...
ANE material, so that its conclusions were more often than not rather based on ingenuity than on actual data. Because of the material at present available, some of the basic assumptions of the Wellhausen school have become untenable. Moreover, the Masoretic text has been found much more reliable than hitherto could be assumed. For these reasons, almost all the results of this school have to be critically reviewed today; the same holds true for the present case.

2. *Geographical and Historical Allusions (especially of Nu 24:17–24)*

The contents of the prose text as well as of the oracles is inextricably bound up with the exodus and the conquest of Canaan. But as both these problems are at the present state of investigation far from being solved, very little can be gained from either of them. As a starting point, the arguments adduced by Albright, Oracles etc. will be considered. So far they have not been seriously challenged.

1) The kingdoms of Edom, Moab and Ammon, as shown by E. Glueck, did not exist before the 13th century (Oracles, 227–8).

   The proofs of Glueck are secure for the 12th century on.

2) An autonomous Kenite people existed only at the Mosaic age, and probably even earlier (Gen 15:18–21, the Kenites are mentioned first; either because they occupied the southern part of the boundaries mentioned or because of their large numbers and territory). Later the Kenites were scattered among the Israelites (Kenites are again later mentioned together with the Amalekites in 1 Sam 15, but as friends of Israel). 1 Sam 30:27 proves that some Judean cities were formerly Kenite cities. (Albright, Oracles, 227)
3) As to Edom-Seir, a date of c. 1300 can be accepted. Albright quotes Egyptian inscriptions of the 15th century BCE relating to Seir, however states that Ashur, the future captors of the Kenites who are described as well entrenched in their mountain-fortresses, 24:21-22 probably alludes to an Assyrian expedition which destroyed the fortified cities of the Kenites, and captured their inhabitants. But the Assyrians were in turn later seriously beaten by the invasion of the Sea-Peoples, who destroyed also Carcemish (Cf. IDB vol 3, 792a), who in turn perished (or will perish) 660 (2.2).

4) The strongest argument of Albright is the close relation between the Egyptian accounts of the invasion of the Sea Peoples and 24:23-24, which took place about 1187 BCE (Oracles 230-1).

5) Both Petor and the "Land of the Ammon" existed at the 2nd half of the 2nd millennium. The relevant data are summed up by J. Liver, The Figure of Balaam in Biblical Tradition, E.Y. III, Jer. 1954, 97-99. (Hebrew)

Some commentators have tried to connect the expressions of royalty and military strength found in the 2nd and 3rd oracle with definite historical situations of Israel. The most obvious suggestion was to see in the allusions to the victories of Saul and later David over Israel's neighbours (Cf. 1 S 14:47-48, 2 S 8:12). At that time, it is assumed, the consciousness of national strength would be reflected in suitable poems.

However, this view is difficult for two reasons: first, there is no mention in any of the oracles of an Israelite
victory over any Canaanite peoples, not even of Eastern Transjordan. The victors of the fourth oracle are envisaged in the (far) future; nor are the Philistines, the main enemies of Israel, mentioned at all. Moreover, the two references to kingship in 24:7, even more so in 23:21, can be explained as pertaining to Y, according to the context. Even if it should refer to a human king, such poetical allusions were standard phrases in NW Semitic poetry (Albright, Oracles 227). They are already found in Gen 17:6,16 and 35:11; 1 in Gen 49:10f (without the word mlk); Dt 33:5 seems to refer to Y. The only historical event mentioned is the exodus of Egypt in the 2nd and 3rd oracle. There is then nothing to prevent the assumption that the content of the oracles refers to the period immediately after the exodus.

3. **Stylistic and Linguistic Features**

1) **The style and lexicographical use of the parables**

1. The parables are written in the ancient tradition of Canaanite poetry. The content and style of the poems points to the period between c. 1250-1100 BCE (Albright, Oracles, 226). Albright's results are based on recent epigraphical material and the Ugaritic texts, and therefore supersede any other evaluations written before him. The late and very late dates formerly suggested have now become altogether impossible.

2. As to the use of certain phrases, some of them seem to be very old and do not appear in later poetry. All belong to the 12th century or are even earlier; they are not found in later texts.
The references are:

3. \( \text{K<sup>2</sup> P, C<sup>2</sup> N} \) is an ancient Canaanite expression for the Antilibanus and its contiguous regions. (Albright, Oracles, 211 n. 15).

For these and other reasons, Albright came to the conclusion that the first writing down of the oracles has to be dated in or about the 10th century BCE, but that they cannot have been composed in that century (Oracles, 209-10, 227).

2) **The style of the prose narrative**

It is the fluent style of the classical Hebrew prose.

According to linguistic criteria, this style is supposed to be much later than that of the oracles, and is by most assigned to the 10th-8th century BCE, when, as generally assumed, the primary sources of the Pentateuch were first written down.

4. **Can the Prose Narrative Be Older than the 10th Century?**

This possibility is not admitted for the reason just stated. Therefore the concept of oral tradition is introduced. It is supposed to have played an important part during several centuries, from the time the narrative began to be told first until its earliest written fixation. In the course of time, it is assumed to have undergone additional changes, perhaps until its much later final redaction; thus, very little of the original narrative remained. For these reasons, and because of its additional folkloristic elements, most commentators regard the Balaam Narrative as a popular saga, trying to relate the oracles to certain earlier historical conditions.
However, it has been shown that the Balaam Narrative contains a very accurate partial account of the ritual of a bārū. The oracles, too, reflect ancient language of the 12th century, and Balaam as a bārū may well belong to the 13th century BCE. Now if the assumption of oral tradition were right, one would expect changes of such a kind that would tend to eliminate ancient, foreign practices like those of a Babylonian ḫḫḫ (or Assyrian) bārū which were certainly not understood any more during the first centuries after the conquest when there is very little evidence of Babylonian and Assyrian cultural influence on Israel. Likewise, the archaic language of the oracles would have changed according to the later usages of Israelite poetry, as already attested in the early 11th century Song of Deborah (Cf. Albright, Oracles, 232 n. 145). To give just one example, ʿārīm would certainly have been replaced by the more common hūrīm. Besides, the more becomes known about the conditions of the 2nd half of the 2nd millennium BCE, the better the Balaam Narrative seems to fit into this picture.

Therefore it seems that the concept of oral tradition alone cannot explain the archaic language of the oracles or the foreign ritual of the bārū in the prose text. For this reason, we suggest the concept of an earlier written tradition which underwent certain changes according to the development of oral language in the course of centuries. This concept would account for the essentially unchanged archaic and foreign elements of the Balaam Narrative. It would account for the first recording of the whole narrative (the oracles
as well as the prose narrative), even in the 13th or 12th century. Copies of texts, made at different periods, reveal their date which is of course often much later than that of their original composition. There is no valid reason not to assume the prevalence of the same practices in Ancient Israel, especially when an event was regarded important because of its religious content. Now the writer of the Balaam Narrative certainly believed that the four oracles of Balaam were prophetic utterances of Balaam inspired by Y.

This leads us at once to the next question.

5. The Actuality of the Main Problem of the Balaam Narrative: Prophecy against Divination.

The main connection of the Balaam Narrative with the Pentateuch is, in our opinion, the obvious comparison between Balaam and Moses, between the diviner and the prophet. When was this problem most actual? One could think of two other periods when "false" prophets appeared in the name of Y.

1) At the time of Ahab, after the extermination of the prophets of the Baal and the Asherah, 1 K 22. This was also the beginning of continuous wars between Israel and Aram. Joram, son of Ahab, fought with the King of Judah against Mesha King of Moab (2 K 3).

2) "False" prophets at the end of the First Commonwealth, and the Babylonian diaspora, are mentioned in Jer 23, 26, 29 and Ez 13. (End of the 7th to the middle of the 6th century). This was a time of intense Babylonian cultural and religious influence on the State of Judea, and later on the Judeans in Babylonia.
As to the second period, it is far too late for a serious comparison with the Balaam Narrative. During the first period, a definite religious Babylonian or Assyrian religious influence cannot be proved. The emergence of these prophets must be connected with the impossibility of continuing to prophesy in the name of the Baal. Actually, immediately afterwards the prophets of the Baal reappeared at the first suitable opportunity (2 K 10:15-25), and continued almost to the end of the First Commonwealth, at least in Israel and later there under Assyrian rule (Cf. Jer 23:13). Again, the "false" prophets in Juda appear to continue the Baal tradition, but switched over to prophesy for Y. for apparently patriotic reasons, as they would not have been otherwise accepted.

The result is that the specific problem of the Balaam Narrative does not fit into any period after the Mosaic one.

6. Biblical References outside the Balaam Narrative

Balaam and Balaq are mentioned altogether eight times in the Bible:

1. Nu 31:8: The Israelites killed Balaam during their war against the Midianites.

2. Nu 31:16: Balaam caused the transgression of the Israelites (in Shittim) by using Midianite women. (In 25:1, Moabite women are mentioned.)

3. Dt 23:5-6: Balaq hired Balaam to curse Israel, but Y. refused to hearken to Balaam's, turned his intended curses into blessings.

5. *Jos 24:9-10:* Balaq tried to fight Israel by calling Balaam to curse them, but Yh, unwilling to harken to him, caused him to bless the Israelites, thus saving them from him.


7. *Neh 6:5:* The prophet reproves Israel because of their ingratitude to Yh compared to his loyalty to them, adducing Balaq's plans and Balaam's answers. The contrast between Israel's prophetic leaders and Balaam, and between Israelite and ANE worship is clearly brought out in this passage.


Of these eight references, (4) obviously repeats (1), (8) repeats (3), and (6) does not mention Balaam, does not repeat it, as (5) may have had (3) before it but shown by their differences. Thus there are five independent references outside the Balaam Narrative. There is no sufficient reason to state categorically that the quotations in Nu and Dt - (1), (2), (3), and (5) - are either late or not trustworthy. Nu 31:16 makes the impression of an immediate, angry reaction, and not of a later insertion. The opinion that the later writers of the Bible tried to designate Balaam, developed especially by Gray in his commentary, is based on a wrong interpretation of the Balaam Narrative, as already shown. The importance of the comparison in Micah is the awareness
of the contrast between Balaam and Moses in terms of religious leadership, and the ensuing, basic difference between Canaanite and Israelite religion (Mi. 6:1-8). In our opinion, these quotations prove that the events related about Balaam were a part of the early historical Israelite tradition, and that their interpretation is essentially the same as that suggested by us. The speech in Ju. 11:25 clearly proves the historical background of the events which lead Balak to call Balaam. All the references point to the date indicated by the Balaam Narrative itself, and there is absolutely nothing in them which would force us to postpone these events.

7. Conclusions

We therefore conclude that all the relevant data:
1) the Balaam Narrative itself; 2) historical and geographical allusions; 3) linguistic features; 4) the actuality of the events; 5) the Biblical references outside the Balaam Narrative; 6) the extra-biblical material — all these point first, to an actual early historical situation; second, to a recording of the Balaam Narrative in essentially its present form, not excluding of course minor changes as indicated above, at a date near the occurrence of the events described in them. According to our knowledge today, one cannot accept these results obtained by a process of elimination as absolute, lacking more positive extra-biblical evidence; but there is so far nothing in the above-mentioned relevant data to contradict these results.