Ancient Israelite Divination: Urim ve-Tummim, Ephod, and Prophecy

In the Prophets, Israelite leaders such as Joshua, Saul, David, and Ahab use divination to help them make decisions, just as their ancient Near Eastern counterparts did. The Torah sidesteps the divinatory character of these objects and practices, and instead, emphasizes their ritual and religious character.

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*David and Abiathar Consult God*by François van Bleyswijck (1681-1746). Rijksmuseum.nl.  “When David learned that Saul was planning to harm him, he told the priest Abiathar to bring forward the  ephod” (1 Samuel 23:9).

**Part 1**

The *Urim ve-Tummim*and the*Ephod*

In its description of the High Priest’s vestments, the Torah includes two mysterious elements:  the *Urim ve-Tummim* (Urim and Thummim) and the *ephod*(a priestly jeweled tunic).

1. The *Urim ve-Tummim*

Exodus describes the *Urim ve-Tummim* as objects that Aaron is to wear in his breast-piece:

שמות כח:ל וְנָתַתָּ אֶל חֹשֶׁן הַמִּשְׁפָּט אֶת הָאוּרִים וְאֶת הַתֻּמִּים וְהָיוּ עַל לֵב אַהֲרֹן בְּבֹאוֹ לִפְנֵי יְ-הוָה וְנָשָׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת מִשְׁפַּט בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל לִבּוֹ לִפְנֵי יְ-הוָה תָּמִיד.

Exod 28:30 Also put the *Urim ve-Tummim* in the breast-piece of judgment (*mishpat*), so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of YHWH. Thus Aaron will bear judgment (*mishpat*) of the Israelites over his heart before YHWH always.

The text here refers to Aaron wearing the breast-piece of “judgment” (*mishpat*) with the *Urim ve-Tummim* inside over his heart and “bearing judgment before God always.” In other words, they are part of his priestly garments and have no active function.

*Urim ve-Tummim* in Numbers

The description of the *Urim ve-Tummim* here contrasts with that in Numbers 27, according to which Elazar is to receive “judgment” (*mishpat*), i.e., a decision, from God through the *Urim*, and communicate this judgment to Joshua:

במדבר כז:כא וְלִפְנֵי אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן יַעֲמֹד וְשָׁאַל לוֹ בְּמִשְׁפַּט הָאוּרִים לִפְנֵי יְ-הוָה…

Num 27:21 He (Joshua) is to stand before Elazar the priest, who will obtain decisions (*mishpat*) for him by inquiring of the *Urim* before YHWH…

It is unclear from this, or from any Torah, passage how exactly the *Urim ve-Tummim*functioned, and scholars have offered some suggestions based on other biblical passages.

Saul Uses the *Urim ve-Tummim*

The classic example comes from the story of Saul’s attempt to understand why his troops failed in battle. The LXX text reads as follows (1 Sam 14:41; the Hebrew in the brackets is a retroversion from the Greek):

ויאמר שאול אל י-הוה אלהי ישראל [למה לא ענית את עבדך היום. אם יש בי או ביונתן בני העון הזה, אלהי ישראל, הבה אורים. ואם ישנו העון הזה בעמך ישראל] הבה תמים.[1]

Saul said to YHWH: “God of Israel, [why have you not answered your servant today. If the fault is in me or in Jonathan my son, O’ God of Israel, give *Urim*, and if the fault lies within your nation Israel,] give *Tamim [Tummim]*.”

This passage suggests that the *Urim ve-Tummim* were a form of lot, cast to decide between two options.[2]

2. The *Ephod*

The *ephod* described in Exodus is a precious tunic worn by the high priest that has two stones attached to it, upon which the names of the Israelite tribes were carved:

שמות כח:יב וְשַׂמְתָּ אֶת שְׁתֵּי הָאֲבָנִים עַל כִּתְפֹת הָאֵפֹד אַבְנֵי זִכָּרֹן לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָשָׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת שְׁמוֹתָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה עַל שְׁתֵּי כְתֵפָיו לְזִכָּרֹן.

Exod 28:12 attach the two stones to the shoulder-pieces of the *ephod*, as stones for remembrance of the Israelite people, whose names Aaron shall carry upon his two shoulder-pieces for remembrance before YHWH.[3]

The statement that the *ephod* stones should be “for remembrance” implies a passive function. In contrast, several non-Torah texts, suggest that the *ephod* was a divinatory instrument.

David Consults the *Ephod*

For example, Abiathar the priest, who served David before he was king, had an *ephod*, which David made use of to receive answers to questions (1 Sam 23:9-12):

שמואל א כג:ט וַיֵּדַע דָּוִד כִּי עָלָיו שָׁאוּל מַחֲרִישׁ הָרָעָה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל אֶבְיָתָר הַכֹּהֵן הַגִּישָׁה **הָאֵפוֹד**.

1 Sam 23:9 When David learned that Saul was planning to harm him, he told the priest Abiathar to bring forward the ***ephod***.

כג:י וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד יְ-הוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמֹעַ שָׁמַע עַבְדְּךָ כִּי מְבַקֵּשׁ שָׁאוּל לָבוֹא אֶל קְעִילָה לְשַׁחֵת לָעִיר בַּעֲבוּרִי. כג:יאהֲיַסְגִּרֻנִי בַעֲלֵי קְעִילָה בְיָדוֹ הֲיֵרֵד שָׁאוּל כַּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע עַבְדֶּךָ יְ-הוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַגֶּד נָא לְעַבְדֶּךָ וַיֹּאמֶר יְ-הוָה יֵרֵד.

23:10 And David said, “O YHWH, God of Israel, your servant has heard that Saul intends to come to Keilah and destroy the town because of me. 23:11 Will the citizens of Keilah deliver me into his hands? Will Saul come down, as your servant has heard? O YHWH, God of Israel, tell your servant!” And YHWH said, “He will.”

David asks Abiathar to use the *ephod* to answer a yes-no question of very practical, military significance: Will King Saul attack Keilah to get to David? After receiving a confirmation that this will happen, David continues with another yes-no question that is answered:

כג:יב וַיֹּאמֶר דָּוִד הֲיַסְגִּרוּ בַּעֲלֵי קְעִילָה אֹתִי וְאֶת אֲנָשַׁי בְּיַד שָׁאוּל וַיֹּאמֶר יְ-הוָה יַסְגִּירוּ.

23:12 David continued, “Will the citizens of Keilah deliver me and my men into Saul’s hands?” And YHWH answered, “They will.”

As a result, David leaves Keilah with his men.[4] Again, these questions are not “judgment” (*mishpat*) in the sense of law but are practical military questions.

Divination and ANE Kings

David’s questions to the *ephod* are typical of ancient Near Eastern divination. Ancient Near Eastern kings, including the kings of Israel and Judah, faced problems similar to modern governments; first and foremost, they faced the ever-present question of war or peace.

As part of deciding whether or not to go to war, ancient Near Eastern kings sometimes made use of highly trained diviners, who could interpret natural phenomena that they believed revealed the gods’ views such as:

* Astrologers who interpret the movements of celestial bodies,
* Haruspices who interpret the anatomy of the livers of sacrificial animals,
* Dream interpreters,[5]
* Augurs who would read the flight of birds,

These are just a few examples of the many sorts of specialists trained in the arts of reading and interpreting signs.[6] If the omens were auspicious, the kings might choose war; if inauspicious, they could go on campaign at a later date or avoid it altogether. The practice of some Israelite kings to consult with priests who had objects like the *Urim ve-Tummim* or the *ephod* is a version of this kind of divinatory consultation.

Ritualizing Divinatory Objects

Why is the divinatory purpose of the *Urim ve-Tummim* and the *ephod* obscured in the description of the high priest’s vestments in Exodus? I suggest that the Priestly author here was uncomfortable with the divinatory purpose of these objects but instead of deleting them from the text and denying their existence, he recast them as ritual objects.

This discomfort is hardly surprising, since a number of biblical texts forbid divination as an idolatrous practice, including Leviticus 19:26, in the Holiness Collection:

לֹא תְנַחֲשׁוּ וְלֹא תְעוֹנֵנוּ.

You shall not practice divination or soothsaying.

The non-Israelite prophet, Balaam, includes the lack of divination in his praise for the Israelites:

במדבר כג:כג כִּי לֹא נַחַשׁ בְּיַעֲקֹב וְלֹא קֶסֶם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כָּעֵת יֵאָמֵר לְיַעֲקֹב וּלְיִשְׂרָאֵל מַה פָּעַל אֵל.

Num 23:23 Lo, there is no divination in Jacob, no augury in Israel. Jacob is told at once, yea Israel, what God has planned.

The recasting of the *Urim ve-Tummim* and the *ephod* as passive ritual objects demonstrates that the Priestly author of the Tabernacle chapters shared this aversion to divination.

**Part 2**

Prophecy as Divination

Like the *Urim ve-Tummim* and the *ephod*, prophecy was also a form of divination and kings would consult with prophets for the same reasons. This is stated explicitly in a story about King Saul, where, on the eve of what was to be his final battle with the Philistines, Saul wants to know whether or not he is going to win:

שמואל א כח:ו וַיִּשְׁאַל שָׁאוּל בַּי-הוָה וְלֹא עָנָהוּ יְ-הוָה גַּם בַּחֲלֹמוֹת גַּם בָּאוּרִים גַּם בַּנְּבִיאִם.

1 Sam 28:6 And Saul inquired of YHWH, but YHWH did not answer him, either by dreams or by *Urim* or by prophets.[7]

In reaction to YHWH’s silence, Saul goes to the female necromancer (בעלת אוב) of Endor to find out. This puts prophecy explicitly into the continuum with dreams, *Urim ve-Tummim*and necromancy! In fact, prophetic oracles function no differently than omens in this regard. The prophet or diviner warned his or her client, usually the king, and then the king could act accordingly.

Let us look at a few examples:

1. The Kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom Consult with Elisha

In the book of Kings, Jehoram, king of Israel, is leading Jehoshaphat king of Judah and an unnamed king of Edom in an attack on Moab (2 Kings 3). As the military encampment runs out of water, Jehoram complains that YHWH has brought them out to war just to deliver them into Moab’s hands. At this point, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, speaks:

מלכים ב ג:יא וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשָׁפָט הַאֵין פֹּה נָבִיא לַי-הוָה וְנִדְרְשָׁה אֶת יְ-הוָה מֵאוֹתוֹ וַיַּעַן אֶחָד מֵעַבְדֵי מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר פֹּה אֱלִישָׁע בֶּן שָׁפָט אֲשֶׁר יָצַק מַיִם עַל יְדֵי אֵלִיָּהוּ.ג:יב וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשָׁפָט יֵשׁ אוֹתוֹ דְּבַר יְ-הוָה וַיֵּרְדוּ אֵלָיו מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל וִיהוֹשָׁפָט וּמֶלֶךְ אֱדוֹם.

2 Kings 3:11 But Jehoshaphat said, “Isn’t there a prophet of YHWH here, through whom we may inquire of YHWH?” One of the courtiers of the king of Israel spoke up and said, “Elisha son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah, is here.” 3:12 “The word of YHWH is with him,” said Jehoshaphat. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

After a brief back and forth, Elisha agrees to consult with YHWH:

מלכים ב ג:טו וְעַתָּה קְחוּ לִי מְנַגֵּן וְהָיָה כְּנַגֵּן הַמְנַגֵּן וַתְּהִי עָלָיו יַד יְ-הוָה. ג:טזוַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה אָמַר יְ-הוָה עָשֹׂה הַנַּחַל הַזֶּה גֵּבִים גֵּבִים.

2 Kings 3:15 “Now then, get me a musician.” As the musician played, the hand of YHWH came upon him,[8] 3:16 and he said, “Thus said YHWH: This wadi shall be full of pools.”

The prophecy itself seems like a riddle, but Elisha continues by interpreting the image:

מלכים ב ג:יו כִּי כֹה אָמַר יְהוָה לֹא תִרְאוּ רוּחַ וְלֹא תִרְאוּ גֶשֶׁם וְהַנַּחַל הַהוּא יִמָּלֵא מָיִם וּשְׁתִיתֶם אַתֶּם וּמִקְנֵיכֶם וּבְהֶמְתְּכֶם.ג:יח וְנָקַל זֹאת בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וְנָתַן אֶת מוֹאָב בְּיֶדְכֶם.ג:יט וְהִכִּיתֶם כָּל עִיר מִבְצָר וְכָל עִיר מִבְחוֹר וְכָל עֵץ טוֹב תַּפִּילוּ וְכָל מַעְיְנֵי מַיִם תִּסְתֹּמוּ וְכֹל הַחֶלְקָה הַטּוֹבָה תַּכְאִבוּ בָּאֲבָנִים.

2 Kings 3:17 For thus said YHWH: “You shall see no wind, you shall see no rain, and yet the wadi shall be filled with water; and you and your cattle and your pack animals shall drink. 3:18 And this is but a slight thing in the sight of YHWH, for He will also deliver Moab into your hands.3:19 You shall conquer every fortified town and every splendid city; you shall fell every good tree and stop up all wells of water; and every fertile field you shall ruin with stones.”

The image Elisha saw of a wadi full of pools is thus understood as YHWH’s message that the drought will end and the combined Israelite, Judahite, and Edomite armies will be victorious over Moab.[9]

2. Prophets in King Ahab’s Court

According to 1 Kings 22, King Ahab had court prophets “on staff” whom he could consult on a regular basis and he consults these prophets regarding whether he should go to war with Aram:

מלכים א כב:ו וַיִּקְבֹּץ מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַנְּבִיאִים כְּאַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם הַאֵלֵךְ עַל רָמֹת גִּלְעָד לַמִּלְחָמָה אִם אֶחְדָּל וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲלֵה וְיִתֵּן אֲדֹנָי בְּיַד הַמֶּלֶךְ.

1 Kings 22:6 So the king of Israel gathered the prophets, about four hundred men, and asked them, “Shall I march upon Ramoth-gilead for battle, or shall I not?” “March,” they said, “and the Lord will deliver *it*into Your Majesty’s hands.”

Although these prophets all turn out to be false prophets, with the one true prophet Micaiah ben Yimla predicting (correctly) that Ahab will be killed if he goes, the story  illustrates how King Ahab used prophets to help him decide whether to go to battle against Aram or not.

3. Prophets Instruct King Zimri-Lim Not to Make Peace with Eshnuna

Mari was a fairly large city-state near the Euphrates in modern day Iraq. The city was destroyed in the 18th century B.C.E. by Hammurabi of Babylon, and its final king was Zimri-Lim (ca. 1775-1761 B.C.E.). Among Zimri-Lim’s many perennial concerns, was whether to go to war against the city of Eshnunna or to make peace with them.[10]

In a letter from to King Zimri-Lim, a palace official named Sammetar claims that prophets have informed him that the god Dagan was against making peace with Eshnunna:

lines 1–16 Speak to my lord: thus says Sammetar, your servant. Lupahum, the *āpilum*prophet[11] of Dagan arrived here from Tuttul. He had conveyed the message that my lord charged him with in the city of Saggaratum (namely): “Entrust me to Dagan.” They [the Dagan priests of Tuttul] answered him: “Everywhere you go, well-being will greet you. Battering ram and (siege)-tower will be given to you…” This is the response they gave him at Tuttul ….

lines 24–28 “Hopefully you will not trust in the peace-making of the king of Ešnunna and become negligent! Your guard 28has to be stronger 27than before.” lines 29–37 He spoke to me: “Hop[ef]ully the king will not make a solemn treaty with the king of [Eš]nunna without asking a god. The situation now is like when the Yaminites had come and stayed in Saggaratum; then I spoke to the king: ‘Do not ally yourself with the Yaminites![12] I will drive the shepherds of their herds into the Hubur[13] and the river will finish them for you!’ lines 38–39 [N]ow, he must not make a tr[eaty] without having a[s]ked a g[o]d!”[14]

According to this text, Zimri-Lim had sent a prophet to consult with the god Dagan at his Temple in Tukkul, and the prophet came back with a clear message that Mari should not make peace with Eshnunna since Mari is destined to defeat them with divine assistance, just as they had defeated Yaminites at a previous incursion.

Sammetar continues his letter with yet another prophetic revelation that he should not make peace, this time from an unnamed female prophet who offers an unsolicited oracle:

lines 41–52 Two days later a *qammatum*-prophet of Dagan of Ter[qa] came and spoke [to me, say]ing: “Beneath chaff, water flo[ws]! They are continually writ[ing to you] (and) they are sending their gods [to you], but they are planning an act of deception in their hearts. The king should not make a solemn treaty without consulting a god!” She requested a woolen garment and a nose-ring, so I g[a]ve (them) to her.

The prophetess begins with a poetic image and then explains the message. Sammetar takes this message quite seriously, pays the woman what she asks, and sends the message on to the king so he can make a decision:

lines 52–57 She delivered her instructions in the temple of Belet-Ekallim before the (female) h[igh priest, Ini]b-shina. I have sent my lord a report [on the matter] which she spoke to me. Let my lord consider (it) so that he can act as the great sovereign (that he is).

Zimri-Lim Ignores the Prophets

From other texts we know that in year four of Zimri-Lim’s reign, he was at peace with Eshnunna, until he and Hammurabi of Babylon turned on their former ally and conquered Eshnunna. Thus, Zimri-Lim may have ignored these prophetic messages, just as Ahab ignored the warning of the prophet Micaiah.

Alternatively, it is possible—perhaps even likely—that Zimri-Lim received other oracles either through prophets or other diviners that the gods were in favor of an alliance with Eshnunna. A treaty with Eshnunna would have involved treaty curses and be sworn by the relevant gods, thereby implying that another such divine message had been received. Nevertheless, kings routinely broke their peace treaty, as Mari itself would soon come to realize when Babylon attacked and destroyed Mari in spite having been allies previously.

Prophecy as Officially Sanctioned Divination

The Torah is aware of the fact that prophecy is, for all intents and purposes a form of divination. In fact, the verse introducing prophecy in Deuteronomy depicts it as the acceptable alternative to forbidden divinations:

דברים יח:י לֹא יִמָּצֵא בְךָ…קֹסֵם קְסָמִים מְעוֹנֵן וּמְנַחֵשׁ וּמְכַשֵּׁף.יח:יא וְחֹבֵר חָבֶר וְשֹׁאֵל אוֹב וְיִדְּעֹנִי וְדֹרֵשׁ אֶל הַמֵּתִים.

Deut 18:10 Let no one be found among you… who is an augur, a soothsayer, a diviner, a sorcerer, 18:11 one who casts spells, or one who consults ghosts or familiar spirits, or one who inquires of the dead.

יח:יב **כִּי תוֹעֲבַת יְ-הוָה כָּל עֹשֵׂה אֵלֶּה** וּבִגְלַל הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵלֶּה יְ-הוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ מוֹרִישׁ אוֹתָם מִפָּנֶיךָ….יח:ידכִּי הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה יוֹרֵשׁ אוֹתָם אֶל מְעֹנְנִים וְאֶל קֹסְמִים יִשְׁמָעוּ

18:12 **For anyone who does such things is abhorrent to YHWH**, and it is because of these abhorrent things that YHWH your God is dispossessing them before you…. 18:14Those nations that you are about to dispossess do indeed resort to soothsayers and augurs;

וְאַתָּה לֹא כֵן נָתַן לְךָ יְ-הוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ.יח:טו **נָבִיא מִקִּרְבְּךָ מֵאַחֶיךָ כָּמֹנִי יָקִים לְךָ יְ-הוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ** אֵלָיו תִּשְׁמָעוּן.

to you, however, YHWH your God has not assigned the like.18:15 **YHWH your God will raise up for you a prophet like myself from among your own people**; him you shall heed.

The contrast is clear: Many forms of divining are prohibited, as they are foreign practices that YHWH abominates. Nevertheless, Israel is not to be left entirely in the dark about God’s will. When issues arise in the future, God will communicate with prophets, and they will tell Israel what they need to know.

Recasting Prophecy

The above is likely the original meaning of this passage, but as Deuteronomy developed, the lack of comfort with prophecy and divination of any sort became dominant. Thus, in the final form of Deuteronomy, prophecy was reframed to be Mosaic and made essentially impossible.[15] This is quite similar to the Priestly approach to the *Urim ve-Tummim* and *ephod*, namely, to maintain their theoretical existence but neutralize their divinatory role.

Prophecy and Divination in ANE Royal Courts

Ancient Israelite kings act very much like any other ANE kings in their desire to determine in advance possible divine support or opposition to projects and whether they are likely to be victorious or not. According to the biblical text, Saul used the *Urim ve-Tummim* and David used the *ephod*, while later Israelite and Judahite kings turned to prophets as a way to divine information they wanted directly from YHWH.

Divination was a fact of life in Levantine royal courts, and kings relied on this conduit of divine inside information as being of vital importance to make decisions. Despite the implicit protestations of the Priestly and Deuteronomic authors, Israelite and Judahite kings were no different in this regard than their ancient Near Eastern counterparts.

[View Footnotes](https://www.thetorah.com/article/ancient-israelite-divination-urim-ve-tummim-ephod-and-prophecy)

1. The Greek reads as follows:

καὶ εἶπεν Σαουλ κύριε ὁ θεὸς Ισραηλ τί ὅτι οὐκ ἀπεκρίθης τῷ δούλῳ σου σήμερον εἰ ἐν ἐμοὶ ἢ ἐν Ιωναθαν τῷ υἱῷ μου ἡ ἀδικία κύριε ὁ θεὸς Ισραηλ δὸς δήλους καὶ ἐὰν τάδε εἴπῃς ἐν τῷ λαῷ σου Ισραηλ δὸς δὴ ὁσιότητα

MT here suffers from a haplography based on a homoteleuton, i.e., a scribe’s eye jumped from the word “Israel” at the beginning of the verse to the word “Israel” toward the end of the verse, skipping the words in between. See discussion in, Arie Toeg, *“A Textual Note on* 1 Samuel XIV 41,” *Vetus Testamentum* 19 (1969): 493-498. It is well known that the MT of Samuel contains many more errors that other textual witnesses for this book.

1. It thus seems quite similar to the divination by lot Joshua uses to determine that Achan was the guilty party who took from the *herem* in Jericho (Josh 7:13-19), or that Samuel used to determine that Saul should be king (1 Sam 10:19-24), though neither of these texts name the *Urim ve-Tummim*. Editor’s note: For more discussion of *Urim Ve-Tummim*, including traditional critical interpretations of how they may have functioned, see Yoel S., [“The Urim ve-Tummim,”](http://thetorah.com/the-urim-vetumim/) *TheTorah.com* (2014).
2. Editor’s note: for a discussion of how traditional commentators have understood the ephod, see Martin Lockshin, [“The Obscure Ephod of the High Priest,”](http://thetorah.com/the-obscure-ephod-of-the-high-priest/) T*heTorah.com* (2016).
3. This highlights a key feature of prophecy or divination in general, namely, once one knows in advance what will happen, one can avoid it. Effectively, David causes Abiathar’s *ephod* to predict an untruth, because David goes away and the people of Keilah never get the opportunity to turn him over to Saul. For a brief discussion of the problem that prophecies can be avoided/false in the context of biblical prophecy and Jewish interpretation, see my,[“Can There Be Another Prophet Like Moses?”](http://thetorah.com/can-there-be-another-prophet-like-moses/" \t "_blank) *TheTorah.com* (2017).
4. Editor’s note: for more on these, see Jack Sasson, [“Joseph and the Dreams of Many Colors,”](http://thetorah.com/joseph-and-the-dreams-of-many-colors/) *TheTorah.com* (2016).
5. For a discussion of ANE divination, see Uri Gabbay, [“The Practice of Divination in the Ancient Near East,”](http://thetorah.com/the-practice-of-divination-in-the-ancient-near-east/) *TheTorah.com* (2016). I agree with Gabbay’s excellent article apart from the last paragraph, since, as I have noted, many biblical texts approve of activities that we today would call divination, such as the use of the *Urim ve-Tummim* and the *ephod*. See also, see Frederick H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation* (JSOTSup 142; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).
6. Similar such groupings of divinatory methods are not uncommon in Hittite texts, see, e.g., Christopher Metcalf, “Old Babylonian Religious Poetry in Anatolia: From Solar Hymn to Plague Prayer,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*105 (2015): 42-53.
7. Interestingly, Elisha appears to be using the musicians playing as a trigger to start prophesying. This is the only clear example of using music to trigger prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. But note the fact that Chronicles connects Levites musical activities with prophesying (e.g., 1 Chronicles 25).
8. According to Kings, Elisha’s fame as a diviner spread so far that even the King of Aram on his sickbed consulted with him (2 Kings 8:7-15).
9. E.g., *ARM* 26 197, 199, 202 and 203. (These are merely the prophetic texts; there are more texts which discuss the issue from different angles.)
10. As biblical Hebrew knows a number of different terms for prophets, so does Akkadian. For further information see my discussion of the relevant terms in Jonathan Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East: A Philological and Sociological Comparison* (CHANE 56. Leiden: Brill, 2012), 38–64, 111–127.
11. The Yaminites (literally, “Southerners”) are a tribe in northern Mesopotamia in the early second millennium B.C.E. Because of the Akkadian form of their name, *bīni yamīna*, earlier studies suggested a link with the biblical tribe of Benjamin, and some contemporary scholars, such as Daniel Fleming, are still of this opinion, but most regard this as a coincidence (i.e., both groups are southerners in the respective areas).
12. This is likely a pun on the river Ḫabur, which flows through Mari, and the underworld river Ḫubur. It might also refer to a canal close to Mari that is sometimes called Ḫubur
13. Translation is mine. For a side by side Akkadian transcription and English translation, see Martti Nissinen, Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East. With contributions by C. L.  Seow and Robert K. Ritner  (Writings from the Ancient World 12; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 30-32. See also, ARM 26 199; *COS* 4, p. 249-250.
14. See my, [“Can There Be Another Prophet Like Moses?”](http://thetorah.com/can-there-be-another-prophet-like-moses/) *TheTorah.com* (2017). Editor’s note: For some attempts by medieval Jewish philosophers to come to grips with prophecy and define it philosophically, see Chaim Kreisel [“What Is Prophecy?”](http://thetorah.com/what-is-prophecy/) *TheTorah.com* (2015).