Introduction

Grammatical Type: n. m./f.

Occurrences: (Total: 399)


Qumran – 68 occurrences2: CD 3:21, 4:13, 7:10.17, 19:73, 1QS 1:3, 8:16, 9:114, 1QP Hab 1:1, 2:9, 7:5.8, 1QPf 12:17 (=4Q430 f1:4), 1Q29 f1:5, 4Q88 8:14, 4Q158 f6:6.9, 4Q163 15-16:11, 4Q166 2:5, 4Q174 f1-1:i-15.16, f1-3ii:3, 4Q175 1:5.7, 4Q177 f1-4:9, f5:6.2.13, f7:3, f12-13:i1, 4Q265 f1:3, f7:8 4Q285 f4:3, f7:1 (=11Q14 f1:9), 4Q292 f2:4, 4Q375 f1:1.4.6, 4Q376 f1ii:4, 4Q379 f3:2, 4Q381 F69:4, 4Q382 f9:8, f31:5, 4Q383 f6:1, 4Q385a f18i a-b:2.6, fB1, 4Q390 f2:i, 4Q397 f14-21:10 (=4Q398 f14-17:i).13, 4Q408 f1:4, 4Q418 f22:1.2, 4Q481a f2:4, 4Q504 f1-2Rii:13, 11Q5 22:5.14, 28:8.13, 11Q13 2:15.17, 11Q19 54:8.11.15, 61:2.3.4.

Ben Sirah – 5 occurrences: 36:21, 48:1.8, 49:7.10

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1 For the publication of this text see YARDENI/ELIZUR (2007:104-105).
2 The Damascus Document and the Community Rule are treated as one document here and therefore attestations in various documents are counted as if they are one. 4Q263 on the other hand will be counted as an independent source. The same is true for the various works called Apocryphon of Jeremiah as it is at this point unclear whether they form one coherent composition or are better understood to evidence various different literary works.
3 The occurrences in the actual manuscripts are 4Q266 f3i:7, f3iii:18 and 4Q269 f5:1.
4 The actual occurrences are 1Q281 1:27, 4Q255 f1:4 and 4Q258 6:8.
Text doubtful

A.1 While the lemma יבש is entirely reconstructed in 1QPHab 1:1 it is certain as that verse appears to be a citation of Hab 1:1.
A.2 The lexeme יבש is reconstructed in 4Q161 f15-16:1 on the basis of Isa 29:10.
A.3 According to the editors IQ29 1:5 reads [...[דוד]]הנה...[א...].
A.4 On the basis of parallels with IQ29 the first word in 4Q376 f1ii:4 is reconstructed as הנביא.
A.5 The reconstruction of 4Q177 f5-6:2 seems reasonable.
A.6 Because of the context, the first word of 4Q88 8:14 (תניא) is usually understood as an alternative spelling for הנביא.
A.7 The editors restore הנביא at the end of line 9 in 4Q158 f6.
A.8 In 4Q285 f4:3 Alexander and Vermes suggest restoring הנביא on the basis of the fact that a source citation is expected here and the cited text most likely comes from Ez 39:3-4.
A.9 4Q376 f1ii:3-4 cites IQ29 1:5, and therefore הנביא is restored at the beginning of line 4.
A.10 Related to these two texts, 4Q408 fragment 11 is heavily reconstructed by Steudel in her edition of the text leading to the reconstruction in line 4 of 4Q376 f6.
A.11 4Q382 f9:8, a Paraphrase of Kings, relies on 2Ki 2:5/15 so that the reconstruction of the context would allow both but favours הנביא.
A.12 The tiny fragment 4Q383 f6 which was edited by Dimant has the letters הנביא in line 1 going into a break. She tentatively suggests that הנביא should be read, but acknowledges that a nif: imperative 'prophesy' is also possible.
A.13 It seems likely that Dimant’s reconstruction 4Q385 fB:1 is correct.
A.14 On the basis of 4Q397 f14-21:10|4Q398 f14-17i:3 the same expression ‘in the books of the prophets’ can be restored five verses later on: הנביא.
A.15 The editor of the editio princeps in DJD XXXVI (364, pl. XXV), Erik Larson, reads a word in 4Q458 f15 2 as הנביא which is given as הנביא in the Preliminary Concordance. Considering the similarity between הנביא in late Second Temple scripts both are possible. The context would allow both but favours הנביא.
A.16 Our lexeme is reconstructed in 4Q481a f2:4 on the basis of 2Ki 2:15 on which this passage is based.
A.17 As 11Q14 f1i:9 is parallel to 4Q285 f7:1 the restoration of ישיהם הנביא is certain but should not be counted as an extra attestation.
A.18 Since 11Q19 61 starts with a near quotation from Dtn 18:20 it is likely that the preceding verses of Dtn 18:14-20 were also quoted in the Temple Scroll. As they are not extant, however, it seems best not to count the three attestations of ישיהם הנביא contained in those verses as we cannot be sure how the author(s) would have phrased the relevant verses.

B.1 In Sir 49:9 Ben Hayyim reconstructs צ[ב] as a title for Job, where LXX does not mention a title and the צ and צ are all unclear.
B.2 Torczyner and Gibson reconstruct צ[ב] in Lachish 6 (1.006.5 in Davies’s system). While this reconstruction is theoretically possible, the now common reconstruction צ[ב] appears better as it picks up the term ישימים already used in the letter.

B.3 It is possible that the Lachish stamp seal 100.258.3 should be reconstructed to read [ק]נביא.⁶ The name נבヤ (Nobai) occurs three further times on Hebrew bullae as a patronym and is, according to Avigad, well attested in South-Arabic. It may also refer to the city נב. The other three bullae (all unprovenanced) are: 100.343.2, 100.785.2, 100.886.2.⁷

Qere/Ketiv:

A.1 The ketiv of 1 Chr 25:1 is נביא (‘the prophets’); the qere has a nif. Participle (‘who were prophesying’). The qere is supported by LXX, Targum and Vulgate. The Peshitta has a divergent text here.

1. Root and Comparative Material

A.1 The root נב/y is a common Semitic root and is attested in Akkadian, Eblaite, Emarite, Hebrew, Arabic, Aramaic, Ethiopic and Old South Arabic.⁵ It also appears once in a Punic name and possibly once in a Ugaritic name.⁹

A.2 In Arabic, the associated verb appears in the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 8th stems. Müllner holds that in Arabic and the Old South Arabian dialects the verb is the primary form of this root and the nouns are denominative.¹⁰

A.3 The verb nabī II is the standard word for ‘call’ in Akkadian and is therefore attested widely in Akkadian literature.¹¹ The adjective is used as a royal title in its uncontracted and contracted forms (nabītu and nabī respectively): RN nabīu GN, e.g. Hammurapi, called by Anu (LIH 94:10).

A.4 The root is attested also in Emir Akkadian in the D-stem as a verb (nubbā – ‘to invoke’) and in two derived nominal forms, a D participle feminine plural *munabbītītu and as a G verbal adjective masculine plural nabī. The feminine form is attested three times in the expression Īšāra ša munabbītīti (‘Išāra of the m.’) and once as the recipients of meat in a ration list.¹² The masculine term is attested once in line 11 of version F of Emir 387 in the expression ina bit nabī (‘in the temple of the nabīs’).¹³ On the basis of these texts, Daniel Fleming has argued that Hebrew נביא should be understood as an active form (‘he who calls’). In contrast, Huehnergard argues that נביא is a qāṭil-pattern of the root נב. Proto-Semitic qāṭil appears in the qāṭil-pattern in Hebrew and is normally passive (or ‘patiens’).¹⁴

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⁶ AHARONI (1968). Two imprints of this bullae, dated to the late 7th century, were found at Lachish. See also AHARONI (1975:21-22, pl. 20:6-7).
⁷ AVIGAD (1975:71 (no. 20), pl.14:20; 1985:305 (no.3), pl.57; and 1990:91-92 (no.4)).
⁸ In Biblical Hebrew the root appears as נב. In comparative Semitics, the root is given as נב/y, נב or נב. However, the last radical was most likely the vowel /i/, cf. MÜLLER (1984:143-144 and 1985) and MÜLLER (1986). According to MÜLLER (1984) this root ultimately goes back to a biliteral root נב with an n-prefix. Conversely, SMITH (1895:389-390) posited a biliteral base NB to which various third radicals such as k, ’ and  were added.
⁹ MÜLLER (1984:144-145). The interpretation of Ugaritic nb/m as a contracted form of nb ‘m (nab/ ‘ammu; ‘Ammu has called’) is far from certain and therefore it is also uncertain whether the root occurs in Ugaritic at all, cf. GRÖNDAHL (1967:17).
¹⁰ MÜLLER (1984) contra KBL. For an extensive list of Old South Arabic forms see HUEHNERTGARD (1999:91).
¹¹ See CAD N I and AHw II.
¹³ ARNAUD (1986:385-386); the tablet on which this variant is attested is Msk 74286b:47’.
A.5 In Eblaite the root appears parallel to $\text{PÀ(D)}$ (Sumerian, ‘name/call’) in lexical lists. The verb also appears in the G-stem especially in names: $i$-$bi+\text{GN}$ (‘GN called’) and $na$-$bi+\text{GN}$ (‘called by GN’).

A.6 It appears that the noun $\text{nàbû}$ is primary in Hebrew, from which the verbs $\text{ḥammà}$ (nif.) and $\text{ḥannà}$ (hitp.) are derived. This has the effect that the root operates primarily as a nominal root in Hebrew.

A.7 Torczyner, Rinaldi and Mánek argue that $\text{nàbû}$ is a loan from Akkadian. This view is opposed strongly by Müller and in view of the fact that the semantics in Akkadian and Hebrew differ so considerably it appears difficult to uphold the idea that $\text{nàbû}$ is a direct loan from Akkadian into Hebrew. That the two words are etymologically related, however, is clear.

B.1 Several attempts have been made in the past to provide $\text{nàbû}$ with an Egyptian etymology. The first to attempt this was Norman Walker who suggested Egyptian $n$-$b$ $i$-$3$-$w$ (the ‘(God-)honoured one’). The sound changes involved, however, make this derivation unlikely. Later Manfred Görg made a sustained attempt to derive $\text{nàbû}$ from the Egyptian verb $nb3$ (‘rave, be excited’) attested solely in medical texts.

B.2 The root $\text{ḥurrû}$ used to be regarded as linked to the root $\text{ḥurrû}$ (‘bubble up’) by softening of the $\nu$. The required sound-change from $\nu$ to $\xi$ renders this suggestion unlikely.

B.3 The folk etymology in I Sam 9 plays with the theoretical possibility that $\text{nàbû}$ is a 1cp PC (imperfect) $hif.$ of $\text{nàbû}$. Land and Pfeiffer proposed that $\text{nàbû}$ is a passive form of $\text{ḥurrû}$.

B.4 Bewer suggested understanding $\text{nàbû}$ as a passive form of a root $\text{ḥurrû}$ III, which according to Delitzsch dictionary means ‘carry away’. That Akkadian verb is now recognised to be $\text{napaṣû}$.


17 TORczyner (1931:322), RINALDI (1963) and MÁNEK (1962).


19 WALKER (1961).

20 BARK (1968:102).


22 GESENIUS (1839:838a), KUENEN (1877:42-45), DUHM (1922b:81), HACKERMANN (1934:42) and PLOGER (1951). JEFFERS (1996:82) quotes Kuenen and reconstructs a root $\text{nīb}$ with the meaning ‘bubble up’, by which she presumably means the root $\text{nīb}$.


24 This has led many to believe that the services of $\text{nàbû}$ were available to the paying public, BRIGGS CURTIS (1979) and LINDBLOM (1962:71). The idea that certain bi-radical roots were extended by the addition of a $\text{ā}$ is defended by MULLER (1984:144-145).

25 LAND (1868:170-175) and PFEIFFER (1947:15). This is explicitly rejected in JOHNSON (1962:24 nt.5).

26 BEWER (1902:120) and DELITZSCH (1896:442).
2. Formal Characteristics


3. Syntagmatics


27 CAD N II, 171.
28 See Fox (2003).
29 While it could be argued that the noun אות is the subject here, the plural verb-form indicates that the nomen rectum, אות, is the implied subject.
30 See fn 29.
31 See fn 29.
The following verbs are used with characters who in the same pericope are described as a (לְאֵל, אֱלֹהִים) 'eat' (1 Ki 19:5.6.7.8, 2 Ki 4:40, Ez 2:8, 3:1.3), 'say' (Gen 20:1.5.11.13, Jud 4:9.14, 1 Sam 3:4.5.8.16, 22:5, 2 Sam 7:2.5.8, 24:12, 1 Ki 1:11.24, 11:31, 13:12.14.15.18.31, 14:6, 18:8.15.21.22.27.30.34.36.40.41.43.44, 19:4.10.14.20, 20:14.35.36.37.39.42, 22:11.24, 2 Ki 2:3.5.15.16, 3:14.16, 4:40, 5:16.19.25, 6:1.3.16.17.18.19.20.22, 9:1.3.5.6, 19:6, 20:1.7.9.14.15.16, 22:15, Isa 37:6, 38:1.5.21, 39:3.4.5, Jer 1:6.7, 20.3, 23.17, 28:15.6.11.13.15, 32:6, 37:7.14.17.18, 38:15.17.20.26, 42:2.49, 43:10, 51:61, Ez 13:6.7.10, Hag 1:13, 2:13.14.21, Zec 1:3.9, 13:5, 1 Chr 17:2.4.7, 2 Chr 12:5, 18:10.23, 34:23), 'hif. 'listen' (Isa 28:23), 1 K 1:1.22.23.32, 19:3.4.9.15, 22:25, 2 Ki 2:15, 4:39, 5:22, 6:4, 9:2.5.6, 20:1.5.14, Isa 28:15, 38:1, 39:3, Jer 37:4.16, 43:7, Ps 51:2, 2 Chr 12:5), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'bring' (2 Ki 9:2), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be ashamed' (Jer 6:15, 8:12), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'shame/act shamefully' (Jer 6:15, 8:12), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'chose' (1 Ki 18:23), אֱלֹהִים 'promise' (Jer 28:15), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'build' (1 Ki 18:32), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be defiled' (Lam 4:14), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'gash oneself' (Jer 10:19), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be ensnared' (Jer 49:15, 55:28), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be bound' (1 Ki 18:42), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'cut' (2 Ki 6:4), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be able' (1 Ki 14:4, 2 Ki 4:40), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 18:28, 2 Ki 1:12, Jer 38:15), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 19:11.13, 20:39, 2 Ki 2:3, 4:39, 20:4, Jer 37:12), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be able' (2 Ki 3:11, 4:40, 9:3.5), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be ensnared' (Isa 28:13), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 19:3, 2 Ki 4:1, Jer 1:8, Ez 2:6, 3:9), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be able' (1 K 20:40), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 20:18), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 13:14, 19:4, 2 Ki 4:38, 6:2, 9:5, Jer 37:16.21, 38.13.28, Ez 2:6), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 19:5), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 19:19, 19:10.14), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 K 3:18), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 13:18), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 11:29), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (Isa 18:25, 18:27.13), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (Isa 24:13), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (Ez 2:6, 15:6, 8:12, 32:7, 2 Chr 25:16), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 14:4, 2 Ki 4:40), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 11:23, 13:14.28, 19:19, 20:37, 2 Ki 4:39, Ez 3:1), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 13.14, 19:15, 2 Ki 9:6), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (Isa 28:14), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 14:16, 20:1, 23:32, 27:10, 29:9, 32:3, 37:19), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 18:29, Jer 29:27), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 19:6, 2 Ki 3:14), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Sam 3:18, 2 Sam 24:12, 2 Ki 6:12, Jer 38:15.27, 42:4.21), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 18:21.36, 22.24, 2 Ki 2:5, 2 Chr 18:23), אֱלֹהִים hif. 'be independent' (1 Ki 13:30, 19.3), אֱלֹהִים ‘flee’ (2 Ki 9:3.10), אֱלֹהִים hif. ‘hit’ (1 Ki 20:35.37, 22.24)2 Chr 18:23), אֱלֹהִים hif. ‘travel’ (Gen 20:1), אֱלֹהִים hif. ‘fall’ (Jer 6:15, 8:12, 23.12, 37.14, 42.2.9), אֱלֹהִים hif. ‘make fall’ (2 Ki 6:5, Jer 38:26), אֱלֹהִים hif. ‘cut’ (1 Ki 18:23.33), אֱלֹהִים hif. ‘give’ (1 Ki
Hanani (I Ki 16:7.12), Jeremiah (Jer 20:2, 25:2, 28:5.10.11.12.15, 29:1.29, 32:2, 34:6, 36:8.26, 37:2.3.6.13, 38:9.10.14, 42:2.4.6, 45:1, 46:1.13, 47:1, 49:34, 50:1, 51:60, Dan 9:2, 2 Chr 36:12, 4Q385 f18a-b:2.6, ḫb:1), Jonah (2 Ki 14:25), Miriam (Ex 15:20), Nathan (2 Sam 7:2) [1 Chr 17:1, 2 Sam 12:25, 1 Ki 1:8.10.22.23.32.34.38.44.45, Ps 51:2, 1 Chr 29:29, 2 Chr 9:29, 29:25), Oded/Azariah (2 Chr 15:8), Samuel (1 Sam 3:20, 2 Chr 35:18, 11Q5 28:8), Shemaiah (2 Chr 12:5.15) and Zechariah (Zec 1:1.7, CD 19:7).


A.6 The lexeme אִישׁ is the nomen regens of תַּרְמִית (1 Sam 28:15, Zec 7:7.12, Hos 12:11, Neh 6:30, 2 Chr 29:25), תַּרְמִית (I Ki 20:35, 2 Ki 2:3.5.15, 4:1, 4:38, 5:22, 6:1, 9:1.4), (Dtn 13:2)[11Q19 54:8, 1 Ki 22:13][2 Chr 18:12, Jer 23:16, 27:14, 28:9), תַּרְמִית (Lam 4:13), תַּרְמִית (11Q5 22:14), תַּרְמִית (I Ki 22:22)[2 Chr 18:21, 1 Ki 22:23, 2 Ki 10:19, 17:13, Jer 7:25), תַּרְמִית (1 Sam 19:20), תַּרְמִית (4Q177 f1-4.9), תַּרְמִית (CD 7:174QMMT 14-1210 (~4QMMT 14-17 i.3.15), etc (Zec 8:9, 2 Chr 18:22), (Ez 22:25,Jer 8:1).

A.7 אִישׁ is the nomen regens of (2 Ki 3:13), (2 Ki 3:13), (I Ki 18:29), (I Ki 18:19), (I Ki 18:22.25.40, 2 Ki 10:19), (I Ki 18:4.13(2x)), (Jer 23:14.15), (Ez 12:16, 38:17), (IQR f1 12:17=4Q343 f1:4), (Jer 23,): אִישׁ is used with the following adjectives: אֶזְרַיִל (1 Ki 13:11, 20:13), אֶזְרַיִל (1 Ki 22:23, 2 Chr 18:22), (1 Ki 13:11.25.29), (4Q375 f1:6), (Ez 13:3), אָב (Zec 1:4, 7:12).


A.11 Hos 9:8 interprets the אִישׁ as a מַכָּה while in Am 7:14 the אִישׁ stands in parallel with the two nouns בָּלָד and בָּלָד אִישׁ.

A.12 The lexeme אִשָּׁה is linked to the deity/city to which it belongs either by it being the nomen regens in a construct connection with the deity/city (see above) or, less commonly, with the preposition (I Ki 18:22, 22:7)||2 Chr 18:6, 2 Ki 3:11, 2 Chr 28:9).

4. Versions

‘no equivalent’ means that the versioonal text does not translate אִישׁ, while ‘not extant’ means that the particular verse is not attested in that version at all.

a. LXX:

> ἀποφθέγματα 1 Chr 25:1.
> προφητεύω Jer 23:26(2nd), Ez 13:3.


b. Pesh:

grb 1 Ki 18:20, Jer 23:37,

nby (verb) Ez 13:2(2nd).


nbyh Ex 15:20, Jud 4:4, 2 Ki 22:14, Isa 8:3, 2 Chr 34:22.

nbyt’ Jer 26(2nd).

No equivalent I Chr 25:1, 2 Chr 12:15,

Not attested Jer 28:6, 38:10, 42:2, 45:1, Psa 51:2, Ezra 9:11, Neh 6:7.14(2x), 9:26.30.32, 2 Chr 9:29, 12:5,

c. Targum32

32 Where the Targums offer different renderings I will make this clear, as e.g. the case of Ex 7:10.


d. Vulgate:


A.2 In Dtn 18:20 the Vulgate uses an implicit subject in the verb interficietur instead of repeating propheta.

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33 Ms. Or. 2363 of the British Museum has חו here.
34 According to Sperber, the text in the Bibliia Regia from Antwerp has חו instead of חו.
In 1 Ki 13:26 most Targum manuscripts have two times וַיִּקְרָא נְבֵי, for MT עָשָׂה נִבְאָה. In order to make the distinction easier between these two men in the Targum two manuscripts add עָשָׂה. 35

A.4 1 Ki\textsuperscript{LXX} 12:24, where 1 Ki\textsuperscript{MT} 14:2.8 is narrated in the LXX is one of the verses in which LXX goes its own way. MT is contained in that verse, but there is no equivalent for the title נביא in the Greek.

A.5 In 1 Ki 18:20 most Targum manuscripts render כָּרָא שָׁכָר, while Codex Reuchlianus has simply כָּרָא.

A.6 The Targum Toseftot have a longer text here which uses כָּרָא שָׁכָר and כָּרָא שָׁכָר.

A.7 The Targum/Targum Toseftot to 1 Ki 22:22 expand the relevant verse. Essentially they render Hebrew כָּרָא with כָּרָא.

A.8 In 2 Ki 3:13 the LXX only translates the ‘prophets of your father’ but leaves out the ‘prophets of your mother’.

A.9 The Targum of Isa 29:10 translates נְבֵי (קֹדֶשׁ) לְבָשׁ, using both the normal translation in Isaiah and the more common general translation.

A.10 MT stands alone in the second attestation of בֶּן בֶּן in Jer 23:26. All versions render with a participle or a finite form of a verb meaning ‘to prophesy’.

A.11 In Ez 13:2 the LXX offers two variant traditions, with Vaticanus following MT and the other manuscripts offering a shorter text which leaves out the word ‘prophet’.

A.12 The ketiv of 1 Chr 25:1 clearly has הבאיא (‘the prophets’), but the qere goes with לָֽאֵבָאיא נבֵי. The Targum and Vulgate which offer verbal forms here. The Peshitta has a divergent text here.

5. Lexical/Semantic Field(s)

A.1 It is clear that the Hebrew root נב is connected to divination, understood here to include both technical (e.g. haruspicy, dream interpretation) and more intuitive (prophecy, dreaming) kinds of divination. Traditionally, it has been understood to refer to prophecy, but it is not always clear which form of divination is referred to. 36

A.2 It is used in parallel with a number of religious specialists: נב, נב הַנְּבִיאִים, נב הַנְּבִיאִים, נב הַתָּרְקִים, נב הַנְּבִיאִים. The LXX, however, with אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָם קָשָׂר, אֲדָמַי, אֲדָמַי, אֲדָמַי, אֲדָמַי.

A.3 Interestingly, the root נב is often used in parallel with other members of the elite, such as priests, or even the רָנָן, suggesting that the number was counted among these.

A.4 Until a 1960 article by Alfred Jepsen the consensus view was that the feminine form הבאיא did not denote a female prophet but could refer to the wife of a male prophet. 38 As

35 The two manuscripts are British Museum MS. Or. 944 and Ms. Solger no. 2 of the Staatsbibliothek in Nuremberg.


37 JEPSEN (1934). See the more careful assessment in JOHNSON (1962:9).

Jepsen argues, this is unlikely as in ancient Hebrew feminine titles are not conferred due to a woman’s marriage, but only because of a role she herself carries out.

6. Exegesis

A.1 Most scholars understand the term נביא to refer to prophecy of all kinds.39 Jeremias asks the important question whether נביא is to be regarded as a professional title or a term describing behaviour.40 Not surprisingly his answer is that in different regions and times it had a different meaning but that the Hebrew Bible does not provide us with enough evidence to decide that.

A.2 There is a debate as to the connection between ecstasy and the נביא, some pointing to the connection with groups of נביאים in the Deuteronomistic History and links to ecstatic phenomena elsewhere in the ancient Near East and elsewhere in the anthropological record.41 Often it is assumed that pre-classical נביאים were generally ecstacies while that aspect lost its importance with the so-called Writing Prophets, most of whom do not bear the title.42 This interpretation is often supported by an analysis of the verbal forms of נביא: usually the interpretation goes according to the following outline. The hitpa’el is used to express understandable oracular speech. As the hitpa’el is used less and less it starts to merge in meaning with the niph’al.

A.3 1 Sam 9:9 claims נביא is a modern term for what used to be called נבאת, and most biblical scholars take this claim on board at face value. In contrast, in Am 7, Amaziah refers to Amos as a נבאת, which Amos does not deny; in his answer he claims in something of a non-sequitur, that he is not a נביא. If the story is to be taken as a coherent whole, then we have to assume that to its author, the two terms נביא and נביאים are somehow similar. This, in turn,

SKINNER (1915:72), DUHM (1922a:79), FELDMANN (1925:100), KÖNIG (1926:9-10), PROKSCH (1930:130), KISSANE (1941:97), EISING (1970:75) and FOHRER (1974:124), ACKERMAN (1998:173) are examples of scholars who think the anonymous woman bears the title prophet only as Isaiah’s wife. HERNTRICH (1957:140-142) translates female prophet but does not comment on the issue. VON ORELLI (1887:39-41) and CLEMENTS (1980:95) grant the woman a prophetic role as part of Isaiah’s family who all take part in the physical manifestation of his message. HEMPEL (1936:32) simply translates ‘Prophet(in)’. DELITZSCH (1889:152) does not specify either, but the way that he refers to the woman simply as Isaiah’s ‘young wife’ (‘seine[jung] Frau’) implies that he regards the title as conferred on her because she is Isaiah’s wife. GROOTAN (1986:67) is unsure whether the נביא is a prophet out of her own right, by virtue of the pregnancy, or whether she is ‘Mrs. prophet Isaiah’.


40 JEREMIAS (1976:7-8).

41 FOHRER (1969:224) regards the prophets as ecstacies like other Near Eastern cult-officials.

42 See SMEND (1893:79-80), HÖLSCHER (1914:125-147), DUHM (1922b:81-82), PUUKKO (1935), LINDBLOM (1958 and 1962), VON RAD (1958:22-25) and UFFENHEIMER (1988; 1999 and 2001). On the question of the use of the title נביא in the Writing Prophets see already JEPSEN (1934) and later AULD (1983a:104-105 and 1983b), CARROLL (1983), WILLIAMSON (1983) and GONÇALVES (2001). In reaction to Jepsen, GUNNEWEG (1959) emphatically states that the Writing Prophets were נביאים, but he fails to explain that the LXX of Jeremiah uses the term προφητής so much less frequently than MT. SOGIN (1987:7-9) also argues for understanding the nominal sentence in Am 7:14 as a past tense. The question whether or not Amos was a נביא is ultimately of no importance to the semantics of the term. WOLFF (1969:359-362) offers the solution that using the verb נביא does not make one into a נביא. In a careful piece VAWTER (1985) argues that while Amos and Hosea themselves did not bear the title נביא it had been adopted for prophets by the seventh century, while the LXX refined the terminology by adding the term ψευδοπροφητής (‘false prophet’).

43 JACOBI (1920:5-6), LOFFHOUSE (1924), HAUSSEERMANN (1932:10-11), JEPSEN (1934:5-10), RENDTORFF (1959:797-799) and PARKER (1978) take both niph’al and hitpa’el to mean ‘to be in or to fall into, a possession trance’. On the question see now also ADAM (2009). In contrast WILSON (1980:136-138) takes the hitpa’el to mean simply ‘to act like a prophet’ as there are passages that do not support the meaning ‘to be ecstatic’.
indicates that the three terms have to some extent lost their differences, which suggests that either the terms were always very similar, or that the author of Am 7 uses them in a way that is reminiscent of 1-2 Chronicles.\textsuperscript{44}

A.4 Due to his analysis of most of the Deuteronomistic History as ‘Ephraimite’, and thus Northern texts, Wilson takes נביא to be an Israelite rather than Judean term.\textsuperscript{45}

A.5 Because of its etymological explanation as a verbal adjective of the root √nb’ with the meaning ‘called’, theological interpretations of the נביא tend to emphasise the aspect of the prophet ‘called’ to office by their deity.\textsuperscript{46}

A.6 Ever since Mowinckel’s magisterial study on the Psalms prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, נביא has also been connected to the cult in the form of cultic prophecy.\textsuperscript{47} The idea has been taken up enthusiastically, but there are few connections between it and the noun נביא, apart from the three Psalmists, Asaph, Heman and Yeduthun, who are referred to as נביאים in 1 Chr 25.\textsuperscript{48} That the singers in the temple are said ‘to prophesy’ (use of verb נבש) is striking, and suggests that the verb could be used with a wide meaning indeed. This connects with the tendency by the Chronicler to use divinatory titles more freely and also to attribute his sources to the writing activity of prophets.\textsuperscript{49}

A.7 It is striking that in Genesis-Numbers the term נביא is used only five times (4x נביא, 1נביא), once for Abraham (Gen 20:7), once for Aaron (Ex 7:1), once for Miriam (Ex 15:20), in Moses’ wish that all Israelites were prophets (Num 11:29) and once to describe how to recognize a prophet (Num 12:6). The title is only indirectly attributed to Moses, traditionally the prophet par excellence, in the announcement that never again was there a prophet like Moses (Dt 34:10).

B.1 Winckler states that the נביא is best understood as a ‘Sachwalter’ (‘royal minister’) comparing the prophet to Herod’s historian Nicolaus of Damascus.\textsuperscript{50}

B.2 Junge suggests interpreting the nb’ in the Lachish letters as a normal messenger.\textsuperscript{51} Müller’s sympathies for the position are well critiqued by Barstad. There is simply no indication in the text that the nb’ is anything but a prophet.\textsuperscript{52}

7. Conclusions

\textsuperscript{44} NEHER (1981:22) states that ‘dans le Livre d’Amos, l’emploi des trois termes se fait avec une indifférence parfaite’.


\textsuperscript{46} WÜRTHEWEIN (1950:24-28).

\textsuperscript{47} MOWINCKEL (1923). GUNNEWEG (1959:81-97) emphatically argues for the link of cultic prophets with נביא All relevant lexicon entries also affirm the existence of cult-prophets but few of them link this to the term נביא as does KOCH (1996:482-484). PETERSEN (1976:55-96) argues that given the title and status of the temple singers by the time of the Chronicler, they should be regarded as the inheritors of classical prophecy, against which see e.g. WILLIAMSON (1982:165-167) who argues that they stand in the same tradition but that their function is to play instruments and sing rather than to prophecy in the strict sense.


\textsuperscript{50} WINCKLER (1906:23-24) followed by ERBT (1909) with a first negative reaction by KÖNIG (1907) and again KÖNIG (1926:10-11).

\textsuperscript{51} JUNGE (1937:7 nt.75). The same view is taken up by ELLIGER (1938) who is followed by WINTON THOMAS (1946).

In its totality, it appears impossible to define the meaning of the term נביא in the Hebrew Bible because it is so different in the literary evidence available to us today. It appears clear that the ecstatic groups of prophets in the Former Prophets are different from those people referred to with the Deuteronomistic expression ‘my servants the prophets’. It is not even clear whether all of its references necessarily refer to prophecy as opposed to non-intuitive forms of divination – the narratives about Nathan, for example, are not specific enough to enable us to tell how he received his messages and therefore what form of a diviner he was.

According to 1-2 Kings groups of נביאים existed in the texts, some connected to ecstasy – but without any recognisable link to divination – others connected to Elijah and Elisha – but with little connection to prophecy. The frequency with which the נביא is mentioned with the elites of the people in those writings set around the end of the Judean monarchy and exile suggest that the נביא was part of the establishment of Judean society, while it seems difficult to connect the writing prophets with this title, as they seem to avoid it, apart, perhaps, from Jeremiah, as even the earlier LXX text uses the title for Jeremiah.

A development appears to be obvious in which later writers use the terms נביא, חזה and רא in almost indiscriminately while earlier authors make more of a difference between them. However, this development is not linear, so that it cannot on its own be used for dating purposes. It follows that נביא is eventually used simply to denote any form of legitimate diviner within the Hebrew Bible.

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