Jer 29:13; Amos 5:4–6).[29] This may have roots in the cultic service that was commonly conducted in association with facilitating access to the deity's knowledge.

Prophets represent perhaps the most well-known medium for consulting the deity found across the biblical literature. Essentially professional diviners—although lay practitioners were likely not uncommon—prophets are known from across ancient Southwest Asia, and in many ways their portrayal in the biblical texts fits broader patterns, though there are important differences (cf. Sanders 2017). Jonathan Stökl (2012) identifies three broad categories of prophet: the ecstatic prophet, the technical diviner, and the writing prophet.[30] Ecstatic prophets and diviners are well represented in the cognate literature, though there is a great deal of overlap between the two in the Hebrew Bible. Stökl suggests the less stratified and diversified populations of Israel and Judah blurred the distinction between the roles, which contributed to a hybrid "messenger-type prophet," which is most clearly represented in the "writing prophets" attested first in the writings of Jeremiah and the Deuteronomistic literature (175–76).

The representation of prophets in the biblical texts is distinct in a variety of other ways (Sanders 2017).[31] For instance, the prophets of the Bible represent only a single deity, rather than an entire pantheon. How much of this exclusivity is editorial in origin is unclear, but an occasional accusation against prophets who utilized illicit means or consulted other deities was that they dealt in some manner of false prophecy, which represents a degree of innovation on the genre (Huffmon 2012).[32] Next, while prophets outside of Israel and Judah tended to operate in groups and directly in the service of the crown and/or temple, the biblical prophets are frequently portrayed as operating alone, and often independently of and even

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[29] According to Lisbeth Fried (2013, 293), the infinitive construct *lidrôš*, "occurs 36 times in the Hebrew Bible and in all but three instances it is used to denote the act of seeking an oracle from a god, either directly or by means of a medium or prophet."

[30] Ecstatic prophets would be given access to information through ecstatic trances, while technical diviners studied texts in order to be able to divine information from the observation of material circumstances, such as the flight path of birds or the shape, color, and consistency of a sheep's liver.

[31] On the terms for "prophet," see Stökl 2012, 155–200. Note, particularly, the following comment (167): "I have argued that *nabī* in Emar and Mari is related to some form of ancestor worship. If the word did not change its meaning in the process of borrowing, it would follow that the נביא was originally linked to some form of ancestor cult. A provisional, if very literal, translation of נביא is 'the called.'"

[32] For instance, Jer 5:31 states, "the prophets prophesy falsely [*nibb'û-baššeqer*]!" Ezek 12:24 asserts, "there will no longer be any false vision [*ḥăzôn šāwə'*] or flattering divination [*miqsam ḥālāq*] within the house of Israel." Huffmon (2012, 71–74) describes the prophets' fidelity to YHWH alone as a reflection of the vassal/king relationship.