

Ecstatic Hypostases in 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:18-24

Bogdan MĂRCĂȘAN

„Babeș-Bolyai” University, Cluj-Napoca

Abstract. *Clarifying the ecstatic nature of Israel's prophecy is a challenge to contemporary biblical criticism. Analysis of ecstatic hypostases in 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:18-24 leads to a recrudescence perspective on the Israelite prophetic phenomenon. The identification of ecstatic hypostases in the two texts under analysis helps to clarify the connection between the possession trance and the Israelite prophecy. The Deuteronomist's interference presents a play of shadows and lights shed on Saul. Despite the focus of the two accounts on the figure of the monarch, the narrator's intention is to present the rise of the Davidic dynasty. The two texts would hide an ideological and religious conflict of relatively late prophetic groups. The purpose of the dispute is the permanence of ruah Yahweh as a transgression of the episodic manifestations of the pre-monarchical period in the context of ecstatic prophecy. Ecstasy and trance come together under the auspices of the spirit possession phenomenon, which requires a framing in an individual and cultural context.*

Keywords: *Ecstasy, trance, possession nabî', nb'.*

Introduction

Saul's historicity has been challenged over time by biblical critics. The controversies were fuelled by the alleged fictional character that covers the narratives about the monarch. The polarity of Saul's personality aroused interest both in the field of biblical theology, cognitive psychology, cultural anthropology, and in the field of neuroscience. The scriptural fragments that involved the character's diachrony, from his anointing to his tragic death, fell under the magnifying glass of historical-critical, literary, anthropological, sociological, psychological, psychoanalytic, and psychiatric approaches.

Saul was seen as a biblical character susceptible to the manifestation of the phenomenon of spirit possession.¹ Clarification on these manifestations of possession, respectively of the ecstasy or non-mediumistic trance of Yahweh's anointed, involves researching the traditions that concern him. Only in this way can the contrasts, ambivalences and problems of textual criticism raised by the

¹ For further research see Keith Bodner, Benjamin J.M. Johnson, *Characters and Characterization in the Book of Samuel*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2020; Martti Nissinen, *Prophetic Divination: Essays in Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, De Gruyter, 2019; Walter Dietrich, *Saul Unter Den Propheten in István Karasszon*, Nagy V. Kokai, and László S. Egeresi, *Propheten Der Epochen: Festschrift Für István Karasszon Zum 60. Geburtstag = Prophets During the Epochs: Studies in Honour of Istvan Karasszon for His 60th Birthday.*, 2015; Carl S Ehrlich, and Marsha C. White, *Saul in Story and Tradition*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2006.; Marsha White, "The History of Saul's Rise: Saulide State Propaganda in 1 Samuel 1–14" in Saul M. Olyan and Robert C. Culley, *A Wise and Discerning Mind: Essays in Honor of Burke O. Long*, Brown Judaic Studies, Providence, Rhode Island, 2020, pp. 271–292; Jeffrey L. Cooley, "The Story of Saul's Election (1 Samuel 9-10) in the Light of Mantic Practice in Ancient Iraq", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 130, no. 2, July 2011, pp. 247–261.; Moshe Reiss, "Samuel and Saul: A Negative Symbiosis", *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 1, Jan. 2004, pp. 35–43.; John V. M. Sturdy, "The Original Meaning of 'Is Saul Also among the Prophets?' 1 Sam 10:11-12; 19:24", *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 20, Jan. 1970, pp. 206–213.

„Ecstatic Hypostases in 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:18-24,” *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 49-61.

fragments under analysis in this article be explained. There have been some biblical critics who have argued that a possible exclusion of post-Deuteronomistic additions from I Sam.10: 5-6; 10-12 and I Sam. 19:20b-24 respectively would provide a much clearer perspective on the early Israelite prophetic phenomenon.²

Although Deuteronomistic History is downright sarcastic in projecting the image of Saul, a series of positive elements that sweeten the Deuteronomist’s ridicule and homage mix can be elucidated in the narrative of choice in I Sam. 9:1-10:16. Lights and shadows can be projected on the destiny of the multilateralism of the Saulide personality.³

Saul’s image was linked to the classical prophecy of pre-exile Israel. Victor Eppstein emphasized the difficulty of establishing Saul’s status in the history of Israel. This doubt about the ultimate judge or first monarch status was also reflected in the audience’s question about Saul’s inclusion among the prophets. Eppstein saw him rather as a charismatic leader, by an extension of the meaning of נבא.⁴

Saul’s state of possession may be marked by an account of a state of anger (I Sam. 11:6-7) or of insanity (I Sam. 18:10-11; 19:9-10). This hypostasis of Saul may reflect the interference of a pre-Deuteronomist editor who placed the verses about the monarch’s moods at the beginning of the narrative of David’s ascension (I Sam. 16 - II Sam. 5). In this sense, the view on the *ruah* concept dynamics change of meaning as the permanent political institution appeared is interesting. The connection is one that involves charismatic authority and ecstatic prophecy, the two contexts of the manifestation of God’s spirit. We cannot overlook an interest in perpetuating this *ruah* and a detachment from what the episodic manifestation entailed. Of course, in this context we are talking about the interests of some late prophetic groups.⁵

It has often been argued that Saul was discredited to point out the superiority of the Davidic dynasty. The purpose of this parody of Saul was given the prominence of the covenant from a Deuteronomistic perspective.⁶

The phenomenon of possession may have been known since pre-exilic times and could have been projected on Saul’s personality.⁷ For religious

² Victor Eppstein, "Was Saul also among the Prophets?", *ZAW*, vol. 81, no. 3, 1969, p. 303.

³ Paul S. Evans, "From a Head above the Rest to No Head at All: Transformations in the Life of Saul" in Keith Bodner and Benjamin JM Johnson, *Characters and Characterization in The Book of Samuel*, London, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2020, p. 102. Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Bioethics in the discussions of the Pan-Orthodox Synode from Crete (2016)," in *Astra Salvensis*, IV (2016), no. 7, p. 252.

⁴ Victor Eppstein, "Was Saul also among the Prophets?", p. 303.

⁵ R. Albertz, C. Weterman, נבא in Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997, pp. 1511-1514. Cristian Dragos, "Women’S Pedagogical Responsibilities, as Seen in Saint Paul’S First Epistle to Timothy," in *Astra Salvensis*, VII (2019), no. 14, p.

⁶ Ralph K. Hawkins, "The First Glimpse of Saul and His Subsequent Transformation", *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2012, p. 354. Cf. Bogdan-Lucian Şopterean, "Jerusalem Temple’s Rebuilding as a Religious and National Unity Factor and Central Topic in Prophet Haggai’s Writing," in *Astra Salvensis*, VII (2019), no. 13, p. 18

anthropology, prophecy involves spirit possession rather than the possession trance. This distinction between the possession trance and prophecy can be seen as a reaction to certain traditions that supported the ecstatic nature of prophecy.⁸

Over time, there have been voices proposing an association of ecstasy with mysticism. Mystical experience involves more than ecstasy. Ecstasy would rather involve changes at the mental level without assumptions about the constitutive qualities of the experience itself.⁹ At the same time, another research direction associated ecstasy with pathological conditions.

Ecstasy and trance seem to be seen in a process of interchangeability. Nihan advocates the use of the term ecstasy when referring to a spiritual rapture and proposes the definition of trance in the case of prophets in terms of behavioural manifestations.¹⁰

The purpose of the present research is the analysis of the scriptural fragments from I Sam. 10:10-12 and I Sam 19:18-24 in an attempt to identify the source of a possible ecstatic nature of early Israel prophecy. In addition to the two passages under analysis, the descriptions in I Sam. 16:14-32; 18:10; 19:9 are also eloquent for the spirit possession over Saul, but they are not the subject of this article.¹¹

Starting with G. Holscher, the idea was advanced that the prophetic movement had its origins in collective ecstasy, in dances or other physical movements that led the participants to the hypnotic suggestion, falling unconscious for several hours. In this state of abnormal activity of the subconscious, certain people with a certain mental fragility could have had mystical visions or experiences that affected the natural course of their lives.¹²

In this sense, the idea of free prophecy of non-professionals would be offered for reflection in the scriptural sequences under analysis.

The two texts proposed for analysis with a view on specifying the phenomenon of spirit possession should be seen considering the research that

⁷ Christophe Nihan, "Saul among the prophets (1 Sam 10:10-12 and 19:18-24). The reworking of Saul's figure in the context of the debate on "Charismatic prophecy" in the Persian era", in Carl S. Ehrlich, and Marsha C. White, *Saul in Story and Tradition*, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2006, p. 108.

⁸ Christophe Nihan, "Saul among the prophets (1 Sam 10:10-12 and 19:18-24). The reworking of Saul's figure in the context of the debate on "Charismatic prophecy" in the Persian era", note 54, p. 98.

⁹ N. G. Holm, "Ecstatic Research in the 20th Century – An Introduction", in N. G. Holm (ed.), *Religious Ecstasy. Based on Papers read at the Symposium on Religious Ecstasy held at Åbo, Finland, on the 26th-28th of August 1981*, Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis, X, Stockholm, Almqvist & Wiksell, 1982, p. 8.

¹⁰ Christophe Nihan, "Saul among the prophets (1 Sam 10:10-12 and 19:18-24). The reworking of Saul's figure in the context of the debate on "Charismatic prophecy" in the Persian era", note 52, p. 98.

¹¹ Reed Carlson, *Possession and Other Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Literature*, *Doctoral dissertation*, Harvard Divinity School, <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/40615596>, 2019, pp. 29-30.

¹² William F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday, 1975, pp. 230-231.

„Ecstatic Hypostases in 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:18-24,” *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 49-61.

emphasizes the role of charismatic prophetic groups in their writing in the Persian period, more precisely in the 5th century BC.

Both biblical passages, the one in I Sam. 10:10-12 and the one in I Sam. 19:18-24, would present the prophetic trance as a consequence of receiving the Spirit of God. Another aspect worth mentioning is the prevalence of hithpael forms at the expense of niph'al in these scriptural fragments.¹³

Hypostases of ecstatic manifestation in I Sam. 10:10-12

A support of the ecstatic prophetic act can be offered by the hithpael of the verb נָבֵא. In I Sam. 10-19 the hithpael of the verb נָבֵא appears 10 times. The interpretation of this verbal form in the sense of supporting ecstatic prophecy was presented by J. Jeremias in terms of the circumstance of exhilarating rapture, ecstatic and frantic inspiration in which someone falls accidentally or by coercion.¹⁴ The appearance of this form of the denominative verb deserves more focus, especially in connection with the early royalty in Israel. Etymologically, this root does not imply an ecstatic act and this is supported by certain biblical passages. Instead, expanding the meaning of this root could have led to the definition of ecstatic behaviour.¹⁵ The hithpael would not involve the action itself, but rather the result of a certain action. Hence the idea of the double status and that of the status of prophet taken over by a certain person, in accordance with the semantic dimensions of the niph'al and hithpael forms of נָבֵא. Although the hithpael itself does not imply an imitative meaning, it can be targeted by the narrator or editor in relation to a personal context. This extended meaning may be one of depreciation or disapproval of a form of the prophetic act.¹⁶ In Saul's case, it could be a biased use.

An important mention of the prophets in I Sam. 10:10 is that they did not provide oracles. Therefore, Michalsen, referring to Parker's arguments, claims that the niph'al and hithpael of the root נָבֵא would have a different meaning in the discussed passages from I Samuel. This is all the more surprising as נָבֵא's niph'al and hithpael may involve prophetic activity. A possible suggested meaning for the two denominative verbal forms is to be or to fall into a trance of possession. This would be Parker's translation. He generalizes this translation to all places where the

¹³ Christophe Nihan, The reworking of .(24-and 19:18 12-Saul among the prophets (1 Sam 10:10" "Saul's figure in the context of the debate on "Charismatic prophecy" in the Persian era, pp. 97-98.

¹⁴ J. Jeremias, נָבֵא in Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann: *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997, p. 900.

¹⁵ Klaus-Peter Adam, "And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them (1 Sam. 10:11b): The Depreciative Use of נָבֵא 'Hitpael' and the Comparative Evidence of Ecstatic Prophecy", *Die Welt Des Orients*, vol. 39, no. 1, Jan. 2009, p. 6.

¹⁶ Klaus-Peter Adam, "And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them (1 Sam. 10:11b): The Depreciative Use of נָבֵא 'Hitpael' and the Comparative Evidence of Ecstatic Prophecy", p. 7.

two verbal forms imply prophetic ecstasy. Both נָבֵא and נִתְנַבֵּא in the passages in I Sam. would mean this.¹⁷

An interesting translation of the Hebrew verbs in I Sam. 10:10 is offered by NRSV.¹⁸

The variant of a favourable trance state, given by the possession by *ruah*, was often advanced in the narrative of Saul's election as king. The version of Saul's election found in I Sam. 9:1-10:16 may involve an early narrative used to justify the king's authority. In this case, Saul would be regarded in a favourable light. We can see that the current narrative on the choice of Saul focuses on the protagonist and the hypostases of the appearance of the seer.¹⁹

Saul's possession is related to his election, not to his becoming a prophet. It would also be a positive assessment of the stereotypical behaviour of the prophets present in I Sam. 10:5-6. We cannot rule out an involvement of the trance in this specific behaviour.²⁰

This fragment stands out by the use of Elohim in certain cases where *Yahweh* would have been more familiar. This would also be true for the expressions: "the word of God" (I Sam. 9:27) or "Gibeah of God" (I Sam. 10:5), respectively in the case of the phrase "because God is with you" (I Sam, 10:7) or "God changed his heart" (I Sam. 10:7). We must also mention the phrase "the Spirit of God" present in I Sam. 10:10. Here, one can recognize the resemblance to the book of Judges where we encounter expressions such as "ark of God" and not "ark of Yahweh", which would imply a high degree of originality.²¹

According to Robert R. Wilson, in I Sam. 10:1-13a we have evidence of a specific prophetic behaviour.²² This would be reinforced by the third sign of Saul's election, the meeting of the group of prophets. The sign would be the confirmation of the choice of Saul revealed by participating in the ritual meal and by anointing.²³ Saul's encounter with the prophetic group involves the manifestation of specific prophetic behaviour.²⁴ The nature of this behaviour cannot be detected. Only a

¹⁷ P. Michalsen, "Ecstasy and Possession in Ancient Israel. A Review of Some Recent Contributions", *SJOT*, no. 2, 1989, p. 39. A similar translation of the נָבֵא nifal we find in Ludwig Köhler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann J. Stamm, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Aramaic Supplementary Bibliography*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000. Here we find the expression "to be in a prophetic trance, to behave like a נָבֵא" for the denominative verb נָבֵא under nifal with reference to the text from I Sam. 10:11. According to the above-mentioned lexicon, the hithpael of the same denominative verb would be translated as *to manifest a behaviour similar to that of the prophets*, and in the later scriptural fragments it could be translated as *to speak as a prophet*.

¹⁸ I Sam. 10:10 "When they were going from there to Gibeah, a band of prophets met him; and the spirit of God possessed him, and he fell into a prophetic frenzy along with them" in *The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version*. San Francisco, Calif: HarperCollins, 2007.

¹⁹ Reed Carlson, *Possession and Other Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Literature*, pp. 29-30.

²⁰ Robert R. Wilson, "Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 98, no. 3, 1979, p. 333.

²¹ A. G. Auld, *I & II Samuel*, Westminster, John Knox Press, 2012, pp. 112-113.

²² Robert R. Wilson, "Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination," p. 331

²³ Diana V. Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*, Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1991, p. 52

²⁴ The use of the word ecstasy for the נִתְנַבֵּא בְּתִיכֶם hithpael in I Sam. 10:10 is interesting "And when they

„Ecstatic Hypostases in 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:18-24,” *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 49-61.

number of assumptions can be made regarding an experience of contagion based on the frenzy of the prophetic group. Saul could have suffered from a latent emotional instability, which would have manifested itself under the tension of violating God’s will and under the influence of the group that prophesied, thus causing the contagion.²⁵

What is certain is that, according to Wilson, we are dealing with a positive experience, which will confirm the choice of Saul, an experience in which the spirit of Yahweh manifests itself (I Sam. 10:5-6).²⁶ The same aspect favourable to Saul is pointed out by Robert Alter who sees the presence of Saul among the prophets in the sense of his investment as king.²⁷

The fact that the prophets are presented playing musical instruments suggests a hypostasis of music induced trance. But in this description, trance is not a form of incapacity.²⁸ This detail is mentioned in similar accounts from various traditional societies supporting the idea of a common prophetic experience, which Saul also joined.²⁹ Hertzberg saw this group of prophets similar to the one found in the shrines, where, under the inspiration of music, those who were susceptible fell into prophetic ecstasy.³⁰

Saul was under strong emotional tension when he manifested the prophetic behaviour. The signs foretold by Samuel would have created a state of excitement and anticipation that prepared him for the act of prophesying. It is worth mentioning that this state of acute excitement and emotional disturbance often ends in total exhaustion, the individual may remain unconscious for a long time.³¹ The possession trance offered a subjective compensation to the group Saul met. The members of this group found refuge from their own anxiety caused by major changes in society.³²

Of course, the question may arise as to the need for a new manifestation of God’s Spirit upon Saul that will culminate in his transfiguration into a new man. Why was this presence of the Spirit of God upon Saul necessary, given that

came there, to "the Hill," he saw a band of prophets coming toward him. Thereupon the spirit of God gripped him, and he spoke in ecstasy among them" or v. 11 "When all who knew him previously saw him speaking in ecstasy together with the prophets, the people said to one another, "What's happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul too among the prophets?" in *Tanakh =: Jps Hebrew-English Tanakh : the Traditional Hebrew Text and the New Jps Translation*, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, 2000.

²⁵ George Rosen, "Is Saul also among the Prophets?", *Gesnerus* 23, no.1-2, p.136. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22977953-0230102016>. 1966

²⁶ Robert R. Wilson, "Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination", p. 332.

²⁷ Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel*. New York, W.W. Norton, 2000, note 24, p. 112.

²⁸ Robert R. Wilson, "Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination", p. 332.

²⁹ J. R. Levinson, "Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders", *CBQ*, 65, 2003, p. 511.

³⁰ Hertzberg, Hans W, and John Bowden, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*. London, SCM, 1982 p. 85 at Victor Eppstein, "Was Saul also among the Prophets?", p. 288.

³¹ George Rosen, "Is Saul also among the Prophets?", p. 134.

³² P. Michalsen, "Ecstasy and Possession in Ancient Israel. A Review of Some Recent Contributions", p. 39.

anointing as king also involved his permeation with divine grace? Edelman claims that this possession of Saul presented in I Sam. 10:10 had the role of popularizing its new status. But the same critic argues that this account of possession obscures rather than clarifies the new status. This possession at best was a confirmation only to Saul and not to the crowd.³³

The transfiguring action of the Spirit resonates with Saul's eyes turning to his own self, which is confirmed by the expression "another man" (I Sam. 10:5), but it also affects the protagonist's attitude, an aspect mentioned by the phrase "another heart" (I Sam. 10:9).³⁴ The manifestation of the Spirit transcends the boundaries of ecstasy, involving the personality and self-abandonment of the possessed. The limits of this action of the Spirit are given by the fact that Saul does not become king through this change of heart. Despite the contagiousness and the metamorphosing aspect, the charismatic experience does not confer abilities. The manifestation of freedom in the Spirit causes changes in one's own self and in one's relationships with others.³⁵

The transformation into a new person is marked by the word הִפָּךְ. This term was used both in the account on Moses' conversion of the staff into a serpent (Exodus 7:15) and in the account on the conversion of Nile waters into blood (Exodus 7:20). In these situations, the Hebrew term הִפָּךְ implies an organic transformation. In the case of the narrative episode about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the same Hebrew term appears, but this time it expresses a dramatic meaning of change. The inner change, in a structural, organic sense of a person, presupposes a subjective experience difficult to detect both by the subject himself and by his close ones.³⁶ This may explain the difficulty of defining the new condition that affected Saul.

However, even if Saul's experience with the prophetic group is temporary, its effect on the monarch is lasting. Saul's subsequent meeting with his uncle suggests that the latter noticed a change that the king would have undergone. We cannot overlook Samuel's mention of Saul's meeting with the group of prophets near the Philistine camp. One of the purposes of the ecstatic behavioural manifestations of Saul and of the wandering prophets near the Philistine camp may be to confuse the enemy. The Philistines' labelling of Saul as insane gave the monarch a psychological advantage in approaching the enemy. We can also make a comparison with the event in 1 Sam 21:12-15 when David pretended to be insane in front of the Philistines.³⁷

³³ Diana V. Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*, p. 53.

³⁴ Significant for this case is Ps. 105:25

³⁵ Stanley D. Walters, "Twain Heights: Spirit and Word in Biblical Prophesying", *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies*, Vol. 1, Iss. 1, 2014, p. 68.

³⁶ Ralph K. Hawkins, "The First Glimpse of Saul and His Subsequent Transformation", p. 360.

³⁷ A. G. Auld, *I & II Samuel*, p.113.

„Ecstatic Hypostases in 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:18-24,” *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 49-61.

Lindblom addressed the issue of the veracity of this spiritual metamorphosis of Saul only in the context of a materialization of the prophetic vocation, as in the example of Amos.³⁸

It is difficult to say what this change actually consisted of and whether Saul noticed it. What is certain is that receiving the Spirit of God compelled Saul to take action. Hence the mention that Saul played a new role.³⁹ The specification of this role is closely related to the identification of the hithpael and niphal of the root נָבָא implications. The connotations involved in taking on this new role may also concern the exercise of military functions. According to Edelman, the mention of the Philistine presence at Gibeah Elohim in I Sam. 10:5 means in the context of this possession, a first military action that followed the reception of the Spirit of God.⁴⁰

Parker dealt with the connection between Saul's possession trance in I Sam.10:5-7 and his possession in the war against the Ammonites in I Sam. 11:6, and the description of the possession of the spirit in the judges.⁴¹ According to the account in I Sam. 11:6-7, the spirit that comes over Saul causes him to become angry, as happened in the case of Samson. Another effect of the spirit possession of Saul, and Samson respectively, is represented by the display of physical strength. Saul slaughtered an ox that he distributed among the tribes of Israel. This text is probably reminiscent of the narratives on Samson, but it can provide the key to the transition from temporary authority to monarchy, from judges to kings.⁴²

Often the verb used to describe the actions of these spirits is נָלַצ translated as "to seize, to hasten," being the same verb as in the actions of the spirit in the book of Judges.⁴³

The two mentions of the spirit possession concerning the war with the Ammonites, in which Saul and Samson are involved, are not examples of prophetic trances, but of non-trances of possession corresponding to Bourguignon's anthropological classifications. The examples would not involve alterations in consciousness, but physical strength. Thus, these notions of possession explain a behaviour different from the trance.⁴⁴

Lindblom was of the opinion that some of the prophets were assimilated to the cult staff of the sanctuaries, being nourished by the sacrifices made. They offered ecstatic oracles and were consulted by kings and court officials.⁴⁵ He considered the references in I Sam. as orgiastic prophecies and stated that ecstatic

³⁸ J. Lindblom, "Saul Inter Prophetas", *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*, vol. 9, Jan. 1974, p. 193, at Victor Eppstein, "Was Saul also among the Prophets?", p. 290.

³⁹ David T. Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2009, p. 288 at Ralph K. Hawkins, "The First Glimpse of Saul and His Subsequent Transformation", p. 360.

⁴⁰ Diana V. Edelman, *King Saul in the Historiography of Judah*, p. 54.

⁴¹ S. B. Parker, "Possession Trance and Prophecy in Pre-Exilic Israel", V.T., 28, 1978, p. 281.

⁴² J. R. Levinson, "Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders", p. 508.

⁴³ Reed Carlson, *Possession and Other Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Literature*, p. 31.

⁴⁴ P. Michalsen, "Ecstasy and Possession in Ancient Israel. A Review of Some Recent Contributions", p.44.

⁴⁵ J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1962, p. 81 at Victor Eppstein, "Was Saul also among the Prophets?", p. 288.

prophets appear for the first time in Israel in close connection with the episode of Saul's election. At the same time, he confers the source in I Sam. about the ascension of Saul an increased historicity compared to that of Num. 11, another text with ecstatic manifestation.⁴⁶ The allusion to the prophecy of Israel as being an orgiastic one is unsubstantiated. Albright mentions that an orgiastic behaviour can be detected in 2 Kings 18 in Baal's prophecies, but not in the two examples in I Sam. That is why, rightly, he recalled the interests of the narrators in promoting the rise of the Yahwist movement in response to pagan ecstasy.⁴⁷

If we were to refer to the group of prophets in I Sam. 10:10 they could be framed in a marginal social context of early Israel. This peripheral reporting takes into account the position to the central authority. In I Sam. 10:10 we are dealing with a group of wandering prophets similar to the one in 2 Kings 4-5 under the authority of Elisha. These marginal prophets, as described in 2 Kings 4-5, were poor, not displaying material wealth.⁴⁸

An important role in validating the prophetic behaviour of Saul in I Sam. 10:10-12 is played by the community. The spectators wondered if he was the head of this prophetic group, their leader, or if someone else was coordinating them. In the peripheral social context, a criterion for authenticating the head of this prophetic group is represented by experience. It was defining in comparison with the criteria of hierarchy and heredity. Ecstatic demands involved the presence of a group leader.⁴⁹

In conclusion we can say that in I Sam. 10 where the nature of the prophetic behaviour manifested by Saul is minimized, we do not find the account of an experience in detail. Indeed, we meet that group of prophets mystically influenced through music, but this does not convey references to the nature of prophetic behaviour.

However, the examples of the trance of non-possession of the spirit mentioned by Bourguignon differ from those of the Old Testament.⁵⁰ In the other phenomenon of the spirit possession in I Sam. 11:6-7, based on the similarities with the judges, it is difficult to distinguish between altered states of consciousness and altered physical strength.⁵¹

In I Sam.10:5-7 Saul's trance can be interpreted as possession of the spirit, as a confirmation of his new status as ruler of Israel.⁵²

⁴⁶ J. Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1962, p. 47.

⁴⁷ William F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, p. 233.

⁴⁸ J. R. Levinson, "Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders", p. 511.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 511.

⁵⁰ See: Erika Bourguignon, "Possession and Trance", *Encyclopedia of Medical Anthropology*, 2004. https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-29905-x_15

⁵¹ P. Michalsen, "Ecstasy and Possession in Ancient Israel. A Review of Some Recent Contributions", p. 45.

⁵² P. Michalsen, "Ecstasy and Possession in Ancient Israel. A Review of Some Recent Contributions", pp. 38-39.

„Ecstatic Hypostases in 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:18-24,” *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 49-61.

Hypostases of ecstatic manifestation in I Sam. 19:18-24

There is also a hypostasis of the trance in I Sam. 19:18-24. But here, there is another perspective on the trance. This is unfavourable to him.⁵³

This passage is critical on the charismatic manifestation of I Sam. 10:10-12. Note that in I Sam. 16:14,15,23; 18:10; 19:9 the spirit is described as evil, but not the same thing happens in I Sam. 19:18-24 where this aspect is not mentioned. Saul's prophetic ecstasy is no longer a sign of divine choice as in I Sam. 10:5-6, but appears as a mark of his incapacity and madness manifested as king.⁵⁴

This scriptural passage is specific to Saul's catatonic state. Of all the episodes concerning Saul, only in this fragment presenting the uncontrolled trance, the effects of this tormenting spirit are shown.⁵⁵

Saul's hostility is the cause of David's refuge in Ramah. The prophet Samuel, the head of a group of prophets, is also mentioned in this narrative fragment. Three times Saul sends servants to capture David, but each time they begin to prophesy when they meet the group of prophets. We find the mention of the fact that the group prophesied, and later, the prophetic characteristics of Saul's messengers are presented. At the same time, the verb נִבְּא appears in niph'al and hithpa'el. Niph'al appears in v.20a, and hithpa'el is present in v.20b, 21, 23, 24. The use of the verb could mean to do the same thing as a prophet does, but without an exact specification of prophetic activity. Many would translate by *to prophesy*, but NRSV translates by *to fall into prophetic frenzy* in all 6 places in this passage.

Although the behaviour of the prophets is agitated, the frenzy is not implied by the verb that describes it. This type of contextual semantic interference could create comprehension difficulties. These difficulties would result from a change in the basic meaning of the term.⁵⁶ The Hebrew word used in v. 20 is נִבְּאִים a niph'al singular masculine participle from נִבְּא, meaning "to prophesy," hence the idea of prophesying in a religious ecstasy.⁵⁷ The presence of this niph'al implies prophecy under the auspices of the Spirit of God in an ecstatic manner, which could be induced by music and song.⁵⁸ In verses 23 and 24, נִבְּאִי תִנְבְּא appears with the construction waw, with prefix to the hithpa'el imperfect נִבְּא, the 3rd person singular masculine having the meaning of *to prophesy*. Thus, he himself prophesied in the presence of others.⁵⁹ He prophesies with the help of ruah elohim רֹוּחַ אֱלֹהִים.⁶⁰

⁵³ Reed Carlson, *Possession and Other Spirit Phenomena in Biblical Literature*, pp. 29-30.

⁵⁴ Christophe Nihan, "Saul among the prophets (1 Sam 10:10-12 and 19:18-24). The reworking of Saul's figure in the context of the debate on "Charismatic prophecy" in the Persian era", p.104.

⁵⁵ J. R. Levinson, "Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders", p. 509.

⁵⁶ Stanley D. Walters, "Twain Heights: Spirit and Word in Biblical Prophesying", p. 66.

⁵⁷ Olugbenga Olagunju, "Ecstaticism in Israel Prophetic Tradition and African Pentecostal Movement", *The American Journal of Biblical Theology*, vol. 17 (28), 2016, p. 16. <https://www.biblicaltheology.com2016>

⁵⁸ Francis Brown, et al., *The Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon: With an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, Oak Harbor, Wash: Logos Research Systems, 2000, p. 612.

⁵⁹ There is a dispute among linguists regarding *the state and mode of action* as verbal grammar categories. With reference to hithpa'el in I Sam. 19:20ff. we can speak of this ecstatic rapture, or frenzy where one would fall by coercion. The presence of this grammar structure, consecutive waw, added to the imperfect of the main finite verb, could render this state of ecstasy by coercion. *see* J.

Verse 20 mentions the presence of Samuel, but he does not join the prophesying group. The fortifying element of this perspective is Samuel's tacit acceptance of the practice of those who prophesied. He recognizes the charisma, freedom, and ecstatic manifestation of those in the prophetic group. The idea of the action of God's Spirit on the human spirit with reverberations on the behaviour of those in the group can be involved in this narrative episode.⁶¹

In I Sam. 19:18-24 a typical prophetic behaviour manifested in the form of an uncontrollable trance could be invoked. According to the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible there are premises for a collective trance in I Sam. 19:18-24.⁶²

We see here an overflow of the Spirit that can be assimilated in terms of the degree of free manifestation with that in Acts 2. This overflowing manifestation of the Spirit, of overwhelming freedom, involves the amplification of an emotional bridge that is constitutive of religious practice.⁶³

Overcome by the Spirit of God, Saul prophesied after tearing his clothes before Samuel. No explicit indication for ecstasy is provided, except for the act of undressing. Saul's nakedness can be symbolically understood as one involving the withdrawal of the Spirit of Yahweh, as he is deprived of royal dignity and authority. The Spirit of God causes the alteration of Saul's condition. This time the divine spirit acts in the interest of the rival.⁶⁴

The effect of this spirit is to bring Saul under Samuel's control. This explains the intention of the narrative to hierarchically subordinate Saul to the prophet.⁶⁵

An interesting detail is that Saul was drivelling. This may be a sign of a mental illness. At the same time, we cannot rule out the delusion that manifested itself over Saul. It lasted all day and all night.⁶⁶ The nature of the delirium was depressing, not euphoric. Saul could be described as manic-depressive, if we approached the psychopathological perspective, with paranoid features and a pronounced disagreement between ego and superego.⁶⁷

Subjective symptoms are almost absent in the account of Saul's disorder. We only have details about his observable behaviour. An interesting detail can be

Jeremias, נִבִּי in Ernst Jenni, and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997, p. 900. That is why the linguists' distinction between *state and mode of action* is important, based on it we can understand the incoativ as subcategory of the non-durational aspect, involving the beginning of an action, fundamental aspect in the analysis of hithpael נִבִּי in I Sam. 19:20ff.

⁶⁰ Olugbenga Olagunju, "Ecstasism in Israel Prophetic Tradition and African Pentecostal Movement", p. 16.

⁶¹ Stanley D. Walters, "Twain Heights: Spirit and Word in Biblical Prophesying", p. 66

⁶² Christophe Nihan, "Saul among the prophets (1 Sam 10:10-12 and 19:18-24). The reworking of Saul's figure in the context of the debate on "Charismatic prophecy" in the Persian era", p. 103.

⁶³ Stanley D. Walters, "Twain Heights: Spirit and Word in Biblical Prophesying", p. 65.

⁶⁴ R P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel*. Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1993, p. 165.

⁶⁵ Klaus-Peter Adam, "And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them (1 Sam. 10:11b): The Depreciative Use of נִבִּי 'Hitpael' and the Comparative Evidence of Ecstatic Prophecy", p. 15.

⁶⁶ K. Nussbaum, "Abnormal mental phenomena in the prophets", *Journal of Religion and Health*, no. 13, 1974, p. 196. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01532658>

⁶⁷ K. Nussbaum, "Abnormal mental phenomena in the prophets", pp. 196-197.

„Ecstatic Hypostases in 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:18-24,” *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 49-61.

provided by the text of I Sam. 16:14 under the translation of the Septuagint. Suffocation appears in the Septuagint as a symptom of the torturous action of the evil spirit. The Romanian translation of the Septuagint mentions the suffocating action of the protagonist following the rush in of the evil spirit.⁶⁸ Joseph Flavius also mentions the suffocation and the feeling of strangulation as effects on Saul.⁶⁹

Samuel's dismissal of Saul was a severe blow, impacting the king, according to I Sam. 15:27-30. Even if he longed to get rid of Samuel, the power of the prophet would have caused Saul to repress his desires.⁷⁰

We can conclude that the nature of the prophetic activity in Naiot seems to involve not only acting as a prophet, but also a trance-like experience. The contact with the prophetic group involves the phenomenon of contagion.⁷¹

There is no doubt here that this specific prophetic behaviour manifested in the form of an uncontrolled trance would be negatively assessed. It is about lack of control and inability. In the context of these narratives, the traditional question on the status of Saul, whether he is also among the prophets, has a new answer for the reader. Certainly, this response for readers is negative.⁷² Prodividic writers and the editors of these accounts turned the arsenal against Saul, David escaped their arsenal by the possession trance rapture of the one who sought to kill him.⁷³

The trance of possession assumed by the two texts is one that does not involve mediumistic communication, even if the root נב is used.

Conclusions

The texts of I Sam. 10:10-12 and I Sam. 19:18-24 can be interpreted both in the sense of the manifestation of prophetic experiences, and in the sense of legitimizing the status of the chosen persons. In this context, those differences of ecstasy mentioned by I. Lewis or R. R. Wilson by reference to groups in a particular society are relevant. Each type of social context corresponds to a certain ecstatic typology. From an anthropological point of view, a distinction can be made between central ecstasy and peripheral ecstasy. The two forms of central and peripheral ecstasy involve both authorization and legitimation. Saul's legitimation may involve a behaviourally manifested transformation, but still undisclosed as in I Sam. 10:6. Peripheral inspiration is focused on the need for common approval, a remarkable transformation and a confirmation of status.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Cristian Bădiliță, et al., *Septuaginta. Vol. 2 Iisus Nave, Judecătorii, Rutb, 1-4 Regi, Iaș i*, Polirom, 2004, p. 316.

⁶⁹ R. James Montague, and Louis H. Feldman, *The Biblical Antiquities of Philo*, New York, Ktav Publ. House, 1971, p. 232 at George Rosen, "Is Saul also among the Prophets?", p.141.

⁷⁰ George Rosen, "Is Saul also among the Prophets?", p.142.

⁷¹ Wilf Hildebrandt, *An Old Testament Theology of the Spirit of God*, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995, p. 171.

⁷² Robert R. Wilson, "Prophecy and Ecstasy: A Reexamination", p.334.

⁷³ P. Michalsen, "Ecstasy and Possession in Ancient Israel. A Review of Some Recent Contributions", p. 39.

⁷⁴ J. R. Levinson, "Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders", p. 511.

The narratives in I Samuel associate the hithpael form of נָבֵא with the paradigmatic Israelite king emphasizing the contrast between him and the prophet. The direct opponent of Saul in I Sam. 19:18-24 is the prophet Samuel, not David. I Sam. 19,18-24 emphasizes the contrast between Saul and Samuel when the latter is presented as a leader of the group of prophets, through the use of נָבֵא.

The development of the tradition of Samuel as a prophetic one and of Saul as a royal figure who is forced to submit to prophetic authority is framed in a retrospective of a disastrous Israelite past.⁷⁵

We are left with the image of a possible positive instance of prophecy in I Sam. 10 different from the negative one, presented in I Sam. 19. This instance of the prophetic act would most likely be one of the possession trance, even though the two accounts do not provide much information about its manifestation in Israeli society.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Klaus-Peter Adam, "And He Behaved like a Prophet among Them (1 Sam. 10:11b): The Depreciative Use of נָבֵא 'Hitpael' and the Comparative Evidence of Ecstatic Prophecy", p. 23.

⁷⁶ P. Michalsen, "Ecstasy and Possession in Ancient Israel. A Review of Some Recent Contributions", p. 39.

„Ecstatic Hypostases in 1 Sam. 10:10-12; 19:18-24,” *Astra Salvensis*, IX (2021), no. 17, p. 49-61.