

Ringgren, Helmer, Israelite Religion trans. by D.R. Green (Fortress Press: Phila.) 1966
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Priesthood

p. 51 Whether a priesthood already existed in the desert period cannot be determined. The references of the Pentateuch to Aaron and the Levites reflect the conditions of a much later period. The earliest sources show that individuals could offer sacrifice without assistance of a priest (Judg. 6.25 ff.; 13.15 ff.; and probably also 1 Sam. 16.5 ff., since Samuel is not called a priest). But priests are also mentioned, for the first time in Judges 17 - 18.⁴⁹ . . . / ^{P.52} Whether the Levites were simply members of the tribe of Levi or constituted a priestly group from the very beginning,⁵⁰ this story seems to indicate that as early as the period of the Judges they were considered specialists in cultic questions. In other words, we have evidence for the gradual development of a priesthood. It should be noted that the story obviously depicts a syncretistic cult.

p. 52 In 1 Samuel 9, Samuel appears as a prophet and seer - verse nine takes the two expressions as being equivalent - to whom people come "to inquire of God." The narrative best describes a clairvoyant who is able to recover lost asses. Somewhat later we find a "prophet" (nabi), Gad, as "David's seer" (II Sam. 24.11); he looks into the future and proclaims the will of Yahweh.

Anthropomorphisms

p. 70 Even if a few anthropomorphic expressions are to be understood metaphorically, the fact remains that God is often described in human terms and that the most distinct anthropomorphisms are found in the earliest strata of the Old Testament. Nevertheless, the universal prohibition of images (Ex.20.4) places the strictest possible limitation upon anthropomorphism. Even if it was not always obeyed by everyone, this prohibition expresses plainly the transcendence of God to a degree not found in any of the other ancient religions. The God who forbids representation of himself cannot really be imagined as a human being. On the other hand, he could not be described without recourse to human features.¹⁵