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Michael S. Heiser, *The Divine Council in the Pentateuch*

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## O. Introduction

### A. Canaanite/Ugaritic Perspective, not Mesopotamia

- Thorkild Jacobsen, "Primitive Democracy in Mesopotamia," *JNES* 2:3 (1943): 159-172
- Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003)
- S. B. Parker, "The Beginning of the Reign of God – Psalm 82 as Myth and Liturgy," *Revue Biblique* 102 (1995): 532-559
- E. Theodore Mullen, *The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (HSM 24; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1980)
- Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Eisenbrauns, 1994)
- Sang Youl Cho, *Lesser Deities in the Ugaritic Texts and the Hebrew Bible* (Gorgias Press, 2007)
- J. Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," *HUCA* 14 (1939): 29-126
- Marjo C. A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990)

### B. Purpose

- Patrick D. Miller, "Cosmology and World Order in the Old Testament The Divine Council as Cosmic-Political Symbol," in *Israelite Religion and Biblical Theology: Collected Essays* (JSOTSupp 267; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 422-444
- David Schloen, *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Eisenbrauns, 2001)

### C. Summary

## I. Divine Council: General Indications of Divine Plurality

### A. Familiar

- Gen 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; 28:12; 32:2
- W. Randall Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2003).

### B. Less Familiar

- Deut 33:2-4

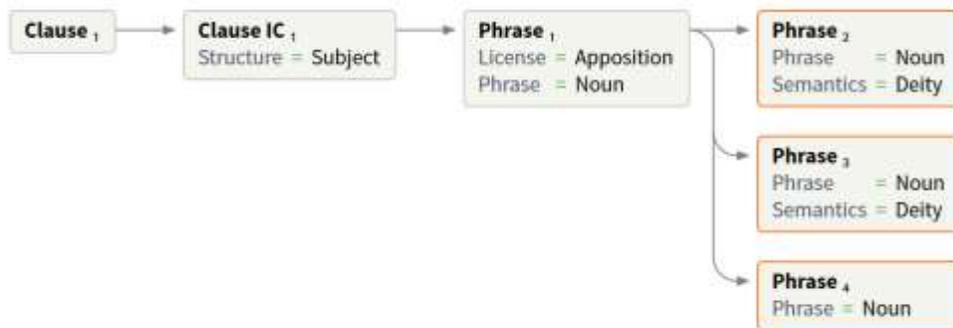
MT (JPS English Tanakh + my insertions)	Septuagint (Göttingen, NETS)
<p>... 2 יְהוָה מִסִּינַי בָּא וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר  לָמוֹ הוֹפִיעַ מִהָר פָּאָרָן וְאֶתְהָ מִרְבֵּבֹת  קָדַשׁ מִימֵינוֹ אֲשַׁדֶּת לָמוֹ:  3 אַף חֲבִב עַמִּים כָּל־קִדְשׁוֹ בְּיַדְךָ  וְהֵם תָּבוּ לְרַגְלֶךָ יִשְׂא מִדְּבַרְתֶּיךָ:  4 תִּזְרָה צְוֵה־לָנוּ מִשֶּׁה מוֹרְשָׁה  קִהְלֵת יַעֲקֹב:</p>	<p>... Κύριος ἐκ Σινᾶ ἦκει,  καὶ ἐπέφανεν ἐκ Σηὶρ ἡμῖν  καὶ κατέσπευσεν ἐξ ὄρους Φαράν σὺν  μυριάσιν Καδῆς,  ἐκ δεξιῶν αὐτοῦ ἄγγελοι μετ’ αὐτοῦ.  3 καὶ ἐφείσατο τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ,  καὶ πάντες οἱ ἡγιασμένοι ὑπὸ τὰς χεῖράς σου·  καὶ οὗτοι ὑπὸ σέ εἰσιν,  καὶ ἐδέξατο ἀπὸ τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ  4 νόμον, ὃν ἐνετείλατο ἡμῖν Μωυσῆς,  κληρονομίαν συναγωγαῖς Ἰακώβ.</p>
<p><sup>2</sup> ... The LORD came from Sinai;  He shone upon them from Seir;  He appeared from Mount Paran,  And <b>approached from Ribebboth-kodesh,</b>  <b>Lightning flashing (variant: “a fiery law”)</b> at them from  <b>His right.</b>  <sup>3</sup> Lover, indeed, <b>of the people,</b>  <b>Their hallowed (“all his holy ones”)</b> are all in <b>Your hand.</b>  They followed in Your steps,  Accepting Your pronouncements,  <sup>4</sup> When Moses charged us with the Teaching  As the heritage of the congregation of Jacob.</p>	<p><sup>2</sup> ... The Lord has come from Sina  And appeared to us at Seir  And hasted from Mount Pharan  With myriads of Kades;  <b>At his right, angels with him.</b>  <sup>3</sup> And he spared <b>his people,</b>  <b>And all of the sanctified ones were under your</b>  <b>hands—even those under you,</b>  And it (NETS footnote: “the people”) accepted from  his words <sup>4</sup> a law,  Which Moyses commanded us,  And inheritance for the congregations of Iakob.</p>

## II. Divine Council: Hints of Godhead in the Top Tier

### A. Two Yahweh Figures in the Torah

- Ian Wilson, *Out of the Midst of the Fire: Divine Presence in Deuteronomy* (SBL Dissertation Series 151; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995)
- Gordon J. Wenham, “Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary,” *TynBul* 22 (1971): 103-18
- Michael Hundley, “To Be or Not to Be: A Reexamination of Name Language in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History,” *VT* 59 (2009): 533-555

See Andersen-Forbes syntactical phrase analysis screenshots of the passages below:



Gen 48:15-16

15	וַיְבָרֵךְ אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱלֹהִים אֲשֶׁר הִתְהַלְכֹוּ אֲבֹתַי לְפָנָיו אַבְרָהָם וַיְצַחֵק הָאֱלֹהִים הָרַעָה אֹתִי מֵעוֹדִי עַד־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:
16	הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגָּאֹל אֹתִי מִכָּל־רָע יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים וַיִּקְרָא בְהֵם שְׁמִי וְשֵׁם אֲבֹתַי אַבְרָהָם וַיְצַחֵק וַיִּדְגֹּן לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ:
<p><sup>15</sup> And he blessed Joseph and said, “The <u>God</u> before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the <u>God</u> who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, <sup>16</sup> the <u>angel</u> who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.”</p>	

Gen 31:42

42	לוֹלֵי אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם וַפַּחַד יְצַחֵק הָיָה לִי כִּי עָתָה רִיקָם שְׁלַחְתָּנִי אֶת־עֲנָנִי וְאֶת־יָגִיעַ כַּפֵּי רֶאֶה אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּזַכַּח אִמְשׁ:
<p><sup>42</sup> If the <u>God</u> of my father, the <u>God</u> of Abraham and the <u>Fear of Isaac</u>, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands and rebuked you last night.”</p>	

Exod 34:6

6	וַיַּעֲבֹר יְהוָה   עַל־פָּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא יְהוָה   יְהוָה אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנּוּן אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חַסֵּד וְאֱמֶת:
7	נֶצֶר חַסֵּד לְאֲלֹפִים נִשְׂא עֵז וּפִשֵׁעַ וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְוָה לֹא יִנְקָה פִקְדוֹ   עֵז אָבוֹת עַל־בָּנִים וְעַל־בָּנֵי בָנִים עַל־שֹׁלְשִׁים וְעַל־רִבְעִים:
<p><sup>6</sup> The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The <u>LORD</u>, the <u>LORD</u>, a <u>God</u> merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”</p>	

Psa 68:20-21 (English: vv. 19-20)

20	בְּרוּךְ אֲדֹנָי יְיָ   יוֹם יַעֲמֹס־לָנוּ הָאֵל יְשׁוּעָתָנוּ סִלָּה:
21	הָאֵל   לָנוּ אֵל לְמוֹשָׁעוֹת וְלִיהוָה אֲדֹנָי לְפָמוֹת תּוֹצְאוֹת:
<p><sup>19</sup> Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; the <u>God</u> is our salvation. <i>Selah</i> <sup>20</sup> Our <u>God</u> is a <u>God</u> of salvation, and to <u>GOD</u>, the Lord, belong deliverances from death.</p>	

## B. Co-regency of the Two Yahweh Figures in Israel’s Divine Council

- Michael S. Heiser, “Co-Regency in Ancient Israel’s Divine Council as the Conceptual Backdrop to Ancient Jewish Binitarian Monotheism,” *Bulletin of Biblical Research* 26:2 (2016): 195-226

Important studies on divine anthropomorphism:

- Marjo C. A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990)
- Esther J. Hamori, “When Gods Were Men”: *The Embodied God in Biblical and Near Eastern Literature* (BZAW 384; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008)
- Benjamin D. Sommer, *Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- Stephen L. Herring, *Divine Substitution: Humanity as the Manifestation of Deity in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (FRLANT 247; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2013)

Illustration 1:

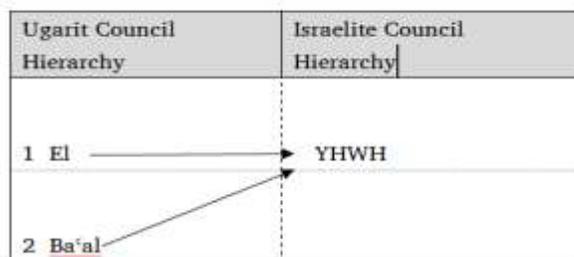
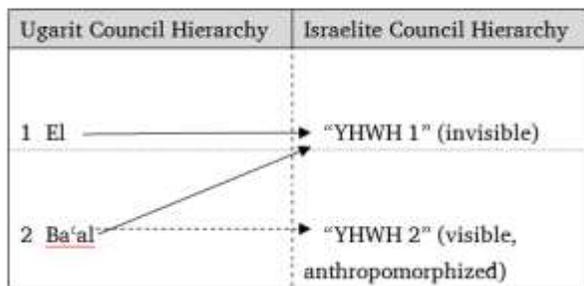
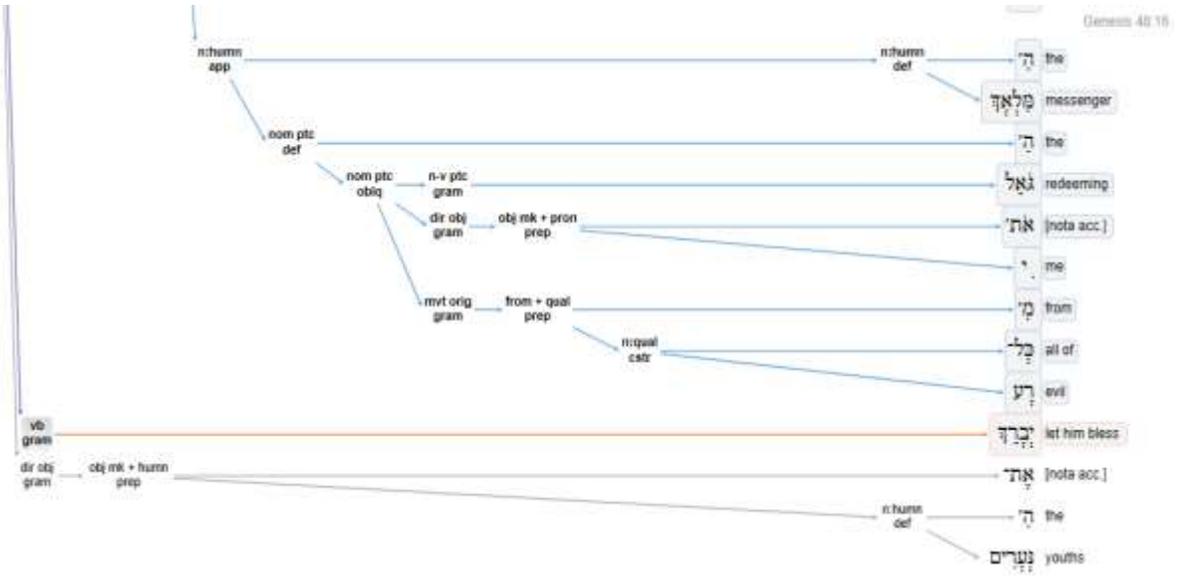
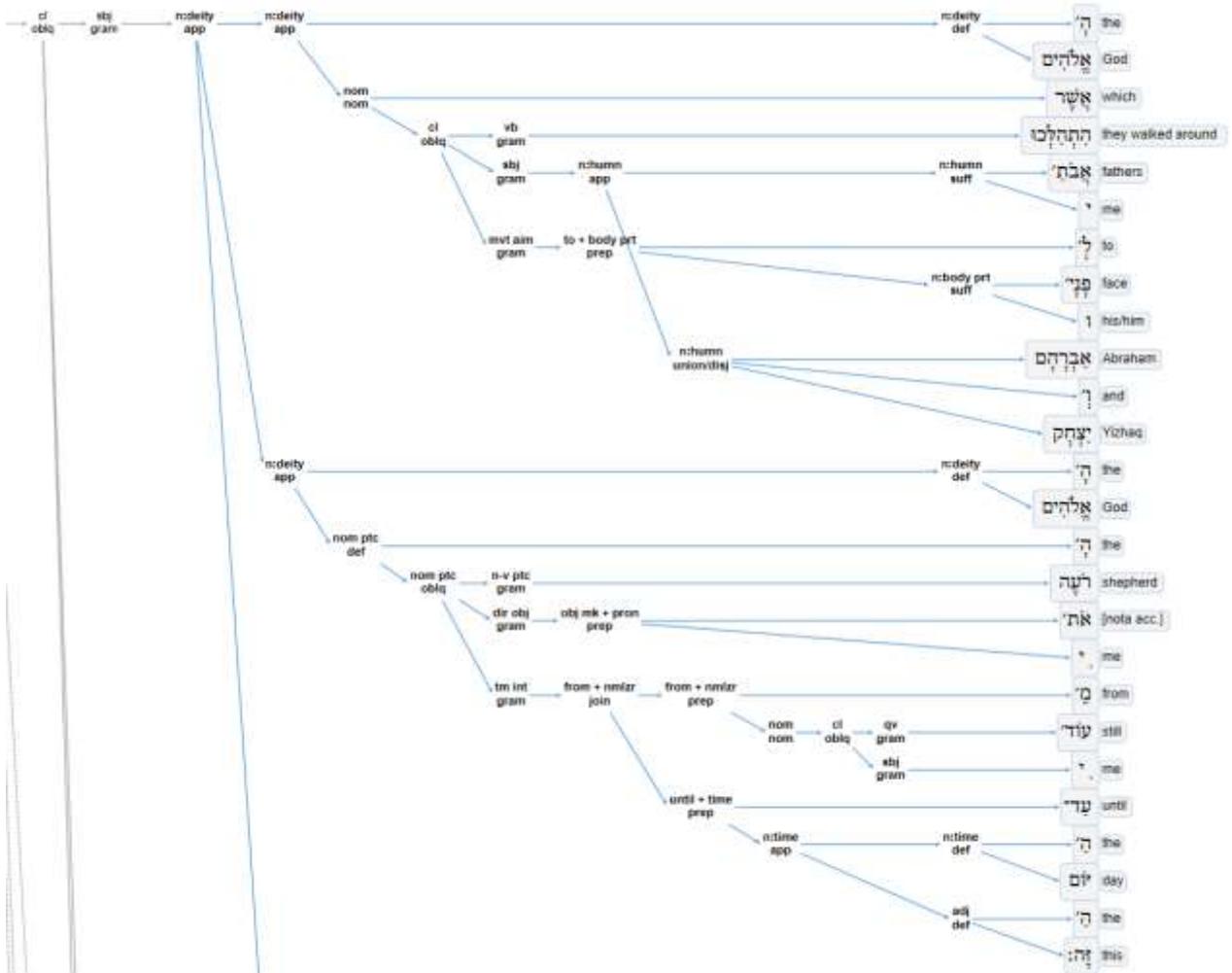


Illustration 2



Specific points of alignment between the second, anthropomorphized Yahweh figure and Ba'al:

1. Ba'al's status as “lord of the earth (’ars)”
  2. Ba'al's portrayal as a victorious warrior
  3. Ba'al's enthronement in his house-temple
- Dennis Pardee, “The Ba’lu Myth,” in *The Context of Scripture* (William W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, eds.; Leiden; New York: Brill, 1997), 269-70, n. 250.
  - Mark S. Smith and Wayne T. Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle Volume II: Introduction With Text, Translation and Commentary of KTU/CAT 1.3-1.4* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2009), 660-62
  - Mark S. Smith, “Like Deities, Like Temples (Like People),” in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (ed. John Day; London: T & T Clark / Continuum, 2007), 9
  - William Irwin, “The Psalm of Habakkuk,” *JNES* 1:1 (1942): 10-40
  - F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Harvard University Press, 1973), 99, n. 30
  - N. Wyatt, “Titles of the Ugaritic Storm God,” *UF* 24 (1992): 403-424



Genesis 48:15-16

