ON FIRE:
PRETERNATURAL AND HYPOSTATIC FIRE
IN ANCIENT ISRAELITE RELIGION

by
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A dissertation submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Baltimore, Maryland
January 2015

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ABSTRACT

Fire is one of the most common images in the Hebrew Bible to depict the divine presence. In spite of this, no thorough study of fire and its relationship to the divine has been undertaken. As a first step toward that goal, this research project will engage a question posed in a forthcoming work by Theodore Lewis, who asks whether fire ever functions as a hypostasis of Yahweh. After a review of the classical and modern scholarship on hypostases in the second chapter, the third chapter will show the close relationship between fire and Yahweh's active presence. The fourth chapter analyzes narratives in which fire acts on its own to accomplish the divine will. The fifth chapter investigates cultic narratives of fire and its relationship to the divine in cultic action. The sixth chapter uses the thought of Gebhard Selz to organize the narratives engaged in the previous chapters on a gradient. In some narratives, the fiery phenomena are Yahweh. In others, the phenomena are not at all Yahweh. Many images, however, fall somewhere in between. In one of these in-between cases, Genesis 15:17, the fiery phenomenon has characteristics of the hypostatized active divine presence. Although this one image is the only evidence available to answer Lewis's question affirmatively, this research project overall advances the larger goal of studying fire and its relationship to the divine.

Ancient authors found in fire an ethereal, dangerous, yet life-giving phenomenon that served as a superb symbol for the divine.

Advisor: Professor Theodore J. Lewis
Second Reader: Professor P. Kyle McCarter
Committee Chair: Professor Matthew Roller
Readers: Professor Jacob Lauinger
          Professor Paul Delnero
          Professor Steven Gross
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am honored and humbled by the number of people who supported me in the writing of this dissertation. My thanks go first and foremost to my advisor, Theodore Lewis, whose good humor and challenging mentorship inspired me to new levels of research and greater clarity in writing. I am deeply indebted to him both for suggesting this topic and for giving me the freedom and the time to follow where the research led. I am also indebted to P. Kyle McCarter, whose works and ideas guided me as I pursued this course of research. I must mention the other professors in the Near Eastern Studies department as well, especially Betsy Bryan, Paul Delnero, Richard Jasnow, Jacob Lauinger, and Glenn Schwartz. They are tireless, brilliant teachers, and their wisdom and direction helped me greatly in my writing. Any good insights on the following pages assuredly bear their fingerprints; mistakes and lapses are mine alone. I must also thank the committee members who joined from other departments, namely Matthew Roller from classics, and Steven Gross from philosophy. Their careful reading and astute questions helped me express my argument with greater clarity. I am grateful to all the members of my committee for traveling through serious winter weather to attend my defense. Finally, I must thank Richard Clifford, S.J., Dan Harrington, S.J., and Robert Divito, who early on inspired me to pursue further study of the ancient Near East.

Several institutions supported my graduate studies. The assistance I have received from the Sheridan Libraries of Johns Hopkins University is beyond accounting. I am also indebted to the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem, Saint Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, and Boston College, each of which offered me generous access to their library resources. I must also extend my thanks to the Jesuit communities.
where I have resided, namely the Saint Peter Faber Jesuit Community in Boston and Ferdinand Wheeler House in Baltimore. To the wider Jesuit community in Baltimore I am likewise grateful for all their support and good wishes during my time there.

Research projects like this dissertation require considerable financial support. I am especially grateful to the Johns Hopkins Krieger School of Arts and Sciences for the generous Dean's Grant I received throughout my studies. I am also grateful to the Jesuits of the Chicago/Detroit province who funded any expenses the grant did not cover. I will not forget the generous investment in my scholarship and future work.

The support and camaraderie of my fellow Near Eastern Studies students was invaluable to me, especially Laura, Heath, Isabel, Heather, Andrew, Erin, Jaime, and Erin. I also received the encouragement of so many friends and relatives. Jen, Pete, Brian, Sean, Sam, Bridget, Dominic, Billy, Mike, and Anthony, I owe you.

Friends of my father, Mickey and Cleo Levine, first introduced me to the Hebrew language when I was very young. In doing so, they turned my attention to a horizon that I pursue to this day. Remembering their kindness and deep faith, I dedicate this dissertation to their memory.
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# Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>AfO</td>
<td>Archiv für Orientforschung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGJU</td>
<td>Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AJSR</td>
<td>Association for Jewish Studies Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>AOAT</td>
<td>Alter Orient und Altes Testament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOS</td>
<td>American Oriental Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARW</td>
<td>Archiv für Religionswissenschaft</td>
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<tr>
<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>BZAW</td>
<td>Beihette zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBQ</td>
<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAS</td>
<td>Freiburger Altorientische Studien</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRLANT NF</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Neue Folge.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUCA</td>
<td>Hebrew Union College Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNSL</td>
<td>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>JPS</td>
<td>Jewish Publication Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>JSOT</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NABU</td>
<td>Nouvelles assyriologiques breves et utilitaires</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBO</td>
<td>Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>OIS</td>
<td>Oriental Institute Seminars</td>
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<tr>
<td>OLA</td>
<td>Orientalia lovaniensia analecta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OrAn</td>
<td>Oriens antiquus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAACT</td>
<td>State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAAS</td>
<td>State Archives of Assyria Series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBL</td>
<td>Society of Biblical Literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBS</td>
<td>Stuttgarter Bibelstudien</td>
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<td>TZ</td>
<td>Theologische Zeitschrift</td>
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<tr>
<td>UF</td>
<td>Ugarit-Forschungen</td>
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<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZAW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. Background

Narratives involving divine fire are some of the most gripping and memorable in the bible. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses and the burning bush, and Elijah's sacrifice on Carmel are just a few of the stories made memorable by the appearance of supernatural fire. Inspired by over a century of scholarship on the topic of religious hypostases, this research project will investigate whether any of these instances of fire show the characteristics of a hypostasis. In other words, does fire ever appear as an abstract attribute of Yahweh that has achieved partial or complete independence from him?

The focus of this research project will be a question posed by Theodore Lewis in his forthcoming work on the religion of ancient Israel. In chapter seven, under the heading, "Hypostatic Fire? Hypostatic Anger?" he asks, "Was fire personified to the point that it functioned as a surrogate for Yahweh that might act independent of Yahweh? Or are we working in the realm of figurative or metaphorical language and we should not use such to reconstruct a pseudo-mythology that never existed in the minds of the ancients?" As a result of this research project, one can answer the first part of this question affirmatively. In one specific text, Genesis 15:17, fire appears to function as a semi-independent hypostasis, mediating the active divine presence even while Yahweh himself is present and active in a different way in the same narrative.

As the following pages will show, the question of hypostases in Israelite religion has generated no little debate. Several scholars have rejected the usefulness of the notion as a tool for understanding Israelite religion. They argue that it is a modern notion, drawn from the thought of ancient Greece, that has been imposed on a Hebrew Bible that has its own native forms of divine manifestation.\(^2\) Countering them is a great deal of evidence that hypostases were part of Israelite religious thought its pre-exilic and post-exilic forms, and that hypostases also appear in the religious thought of Israel's neighbors. As the chapters below will show, scholarly studies of Yahweh's \(\text{šēm}, \ \text{āšērā}, \ \text{and} \ \text{āp}\) reveal that Israel had its own traditions of hypostases. The discussion of divine hypostases in Israelite religion thus continues to be a way to enter the theological imagination of the culture that produced the Hebrew Bible.

Given this ongoing discussion of divine hypostases in Israelite religion, it is perhaps surprising that no one has yet taken up a study of divine fire. Fire is vivid and powerful.\(^3\) Religious writers often use fire as a symbol of divine energy, especially as a symbol for self-sustaining, transforming, life-giving, or destructive divine energy. It is one of the most common images in the Hebrew Bible to indicate the divine presence, yet few scholars have taken up fire as its own topic of study.

\(^2\) Three of these are storm theophanies (2 Samuel 22 / Psalm 18), the appearance of the \(\text{mal’ak yhwh}\), the "messenger/angel of Yahweh" (Exodus 3:2), and the appearance of the \(\text{kəḇōd-yhwh}\), "the glory of Yahweh" (Leviticus 9:23). Each of these will be studied more thoroughly below (pgs. 63-69, 159-163, 69-88).


"A rapid but persistent chemical reaction accompanied by the emission of light and heat. The reaction is self-sustaining, unless extinguished, to the extent that it continues until the fuel concentration falls below a minimum value. Most commonly, it results from a rapid exothermic combination with oxygen by some combustible material. Flame and heat also may result from a reaction involving an agent other than oxygen. Thus, certain reactive metals such as zinc will burn in an atmosphere of chlorine... Flame, the visible manifestation of fire, results from a heating to incandescence of minute particulate matter composed principally of incompletely burned fuel. The color of the flame depends upon the material undergoing reaction and the temperature."
Two scholarly traditions likely inhibited the study of this most prominent image. The philological tradition, illustrated by S. R. Driver, H. L. Ginsberg, W. F. Albright, and E. A. Spieser, among others, focused on reading Israel's texts within the context of other ancient Near Eastern texts. Although artifacts, cultic realia, and images were part of this approach, pride of place was given to ideas that could be subjected to textual and linguistic comparisons. Such an approach, suited to the study of words and texts, bore fruit in the analysis of non-visual abstractions like the divine šēm or 'āšêrā. The other approach, the theological tradition, is best illustrated by scholars like Walther Eichrodt or Gerhard von Rad. Scholars in this tradition sought out the system of religious beliefs that lay under the text of the Hebrew Bible. Such a synthetic approach tended to relegate images like divine fire to a secondary level, treating them as poetic presentations of fundamental theological principles.

These two approaches yielded much fruit, but as study continued, it became clear that religious images and realia had their own meaning in ancient practice, and required studies of their own. The groundbreaking work of Othmar Keel, for example, revealed the wealth of information communicated through descriptions of religious iconography in the psalms. The work of scholars associated with Othmar Keel's "Fribourg school" has highlighted the primary importance of the visually perceptible components of Israelite religion. Such scholarship would suggest that fire, when it was related to Yahweh in ancient Israelite narrative and cult, conveyed a meaning of its own, beyond whatever ideas it might also have symbolized.

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5 The scholarship of the Freiburg school appears mainly in the *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* series. For a detailed list of titles, see http://www.v-r.de/de/seriesdetail-0-0/orbis_biblicus_et_orientalis-627/
Yet another scholarly trajectory encourages a study of fire. As the research below will show, a deepening appreciation of religious diversity in ancient Israel has reopened questions about divine embodiment, divine mediation, and the presence of hypostases in Israelite religion. Scholars have known since the Pentateuchal Documentary Hypothesis was first proposed that distinct yet closely related Yahwistic traditions come together in the Hebrew Bible. Further developments in archaeology and epigraphy have revealed an even more diverse set of traditions in ancient Israelite religion, and deepened our appreciation of its complexity and variety. These fresh insights make a new study of fire and its relationship to Yahweh timely and appropriate.

Scholarship of the religion of ancient Israel includes a growing body of work on religious imagination. One important focus of these studies is the description of divine embodiment and mediation. Such a focus also includes the study of technical terms like mal'ak yhwh and kəbōd yhwh. Two works of this sort that especially informed this research project are Benjamin Sommer's Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel and Sean Zelig Aster's Unbeatable Light. Both scholars list images of fire among the most important motifs of divine embodiment and mediation in religious narrative and the cult. Until now, no one has undertaken a thorough study of fire in narrative or cultic contexts. This research project is one step toward that goal.

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6 For two important studies on the diversity of Israelite religion, see Ziony Zevit, The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches (London: Continuum, 2001), and Francesca Stavrakopoulou and John Barton, eds., Religious Diversity in Ancient Israel and Judah (London: T & T Clark, 2010).

II. History of Scholarship

In spite of the fact that no scholar has taken up a comprehensive study of fire in the Hebrew Bible, several scholars have given thought to individual instances of fire in the biblical narrative. Patrick Miller, writing in 1965, is the first modern scholar to look systematically at the biblical motif of fire, which he compares to similar images in Canaanite mythology. He notes that most of these images come from motifs of divine warfare. He argues that divine weapons are usually fiery, and are probably poetic descriptions of lightning.\footnote{Patrick Miller, "Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel," \textit{Catholic Biblical Quarterly} 27 (1965): 257.} He also catalogs the different fiery messengers that attend deities in Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Israelite literature, where they appear either as warrior-heralds, or as battlefield attendants.\footnote{Miller, "Mythology," 257-259.} Third, Miller relates the narrative image of Yahweh as "devouring fire" to the practice of the \textit{hērem}, the total burning of enemy cities and goods during wars of conquest.\footnote{Miller, "Mythology," 261.} In sum, Miller states that fire symbolizes Yahweh's wrath, his active presence, and his accompaniment of Israel at war.

Moshe Weinfeld, writing in 1983, takes up Miller's analysis of these images of divine fire in warfare. Fundamental to his study is his argument that the preternatural fire images found in the Hebrew Bible depended on the belief that deities were enshrouded in a "glowing cloud."\footnote{Moshe Weinfeld, "Divine Intervention in War in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East," \textit{History, Historiography and Interpretation: Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Literatures} (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1984), 132.} Descriptions of these clouds appear in the literature of Greece, Israel, Mesopotamia, Canaan and Egypt. The clouds represented the refulgent power of the deity in biblical and cognate literature. Individuals whom the gods specially favor...
can display such refulgence as well (e.g. Achilles in Iliad XVIII 250ff, and XXII 136ff, and Moses in Exodus 34:35). Human refulgence is always divine in origin; when a human displays radiant power, he or she has received it from a patron deity, as Achilles did from Athena in the Iliad, and Moses did from Yahweh in Exodus.\textsuperscript{12} In the Hebrew Bible, this glowing cloud appears preeminently in Pentateuchal P texts as the \textit{kābōd} the brilliant shroud of "glory" that, according to P, surrounded Yahweh at all times. The \textit{kābōd}, Weinfeld argues, is the literary/theological source for many of the narratives of preternatural fire. The \textit{kābōd} symbolized Yahweh's active presence within Israel, from which, "arrows, lightning, hail, and brimstone... are showered upon the enemy by the thundering God, who resides in a cloud-enveloped splendor."\textsuperscript{13}

Ron Hendel, writing in 1985, introduces a different source for fiery images in his study of the "flaming, turning sword" mentioned in Genesis 3:24.\textsuperscript{14} Hendel argues that this being is best compared to pre-monotheistic minor deities who acted as "messengers of fire." These beings also appear in Miller's and Weinfeld's discussions of preternatural fire.\textsuperscript{15} Miller notes that these fiery messengers, known from Ugaritic and Phoenician literature, influenced Israelite conceptions of the heavenly host.\textsuperscript{16} Drawing on this insight, Hendel contends that biblical authors would have thought that at least some of the heavenly host were fiery in nature. The mysterious phrase \textit{lahaṭ haḥereb}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{12} Weinfeld, "Intervention," 133.
\textsuperscript{13} Weinfeld, "Intervention," 136.
\textsuperscript{15} Miller, "Mythology," 257-259; Weinfeld discusses this possibility too, "Intervention," 132.
\textsuperscript{16} Miller, "Mythology," 259.
\end{flushleft}
hammithappeket in Genesis 3:24 therefore likely represents the personal name of a fiery heavenly being: Flame-of-the-Whirling-Sword. The phrasing of such a name, specifically a divine name in construct followed by the name of a weapon, is, according to Hendel, a parallel to Ršp ḥṣ, Resheph-of-the-Arrow, an epithet of the Canaanite deity. Hendel argues that this particular biblical image comes from mythic images of Yahweh's celestial military entourage.

In 1988, Victor Morla Asensio published a dissertation written at the Pontifical Biblical Institute entitled, El Fuego en el Antiguo Testamento: Estudio de semántica Lingüística. His goal was "to address the subject matter of fire from a linguistic perspective, specifically from structural semantics." In short, he employs structural semantics to answer the question, "What does the Hebrew word 'ēš mean?" He answers this question by determining the lexical field of words signifying fire and its activity in the Masoretic tradition. He begins by identifying and analyzing all the contexts in the MT and Sirach wherein the word 'ēš appears. He then looks at words that regularly appear in these contexts in relationship with 'ēš, either as synonyms, antonyms, descriptions, or verbs. He is especially sensitive to the uses of fire in both profane and cultic contexts. He concludes that, in the MT and Sirach, fire is a relatively uniform reality in both its literary and religious perspectives. In fact, "todo se caracteriza por una

17 Hendel, "Whirling," 673. See KAI 32.3, 4.
19 Morla Asensio, Fuego, 17. Translation is by the author of this study.
20 Morla Asensio, Fuego, 36-39.
21 See especially Morla Asensio's discussion of šrp in Fuego, 199-205.
uniformidad casi monótona." The reality is so uniform, in fact, that Morla Asensio wonders if modern readers should reconsider any sharp division they make between the proverbial and real uses of fiery terms. Metaphorical mentions of fire in the MT and Sirach, he claims, are not distinguished from descriptions of real fire in any clear way. Although his work does not influence any of the following studies, it is a good reminder that the "sacred-profane" distinction might not be as clearly drawn in the Bible as modern scholars presume.

Jacob Milgrom, writing in his 1991 commentary on Leviticus, studies the divine fire associated with the Levitical cult. Like Weinfeld, he believes that images of divine fire depend on the kābōd, the fiery cloud, which on earth hovered over the ark. This glowing cloud could send out fire to consume sacrifices or to punish those who desecrated the sanctuary, as it did in the case of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:2). From this fiery cloud came the blaze that mingled with the 'ēš tāmīḏ, the perpetual fire that burned in the Jerusalem sanctuary. Within the 'ēš tāmīḏ was the "Presence that came to dwell in the world." In Milgrom's thinking, fire preeminently manifests Yahweh's activity in the cult, Yahweh's protection of the cult and of Israel, and Yahweh's enduring presence in Israel.

22 Morla Asensio, Fuego, 267.
23 Morla Asensio, Fuego, 268.
25 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 599. For a discussion of this passage, see below, pgs. 178-182.
26 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 398-399.
27 Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 590.
In 1996, Richard Steiner took up a discussion of divine fire in his study of the crux in Deuteronomy 33:2, which he reads: mîmînô ʿēš dāʿ lämō "From his right, fire flew to them." Steiner believes this to be a poetic description of lightning used as a divine weapon.28 The image of lightning plays on two verbs previously used in the poem, hòpiạ’ (to shine) and bā’ (to come). The image of lightning unites the two types of protection Yahweh offers: he shines his protective attention on his people from afar, and he comes to their aid in the flight of his lightning.29

Ian Wilson discussed divine fire in his *Out of The Midst of the Fire: Divine Presence in Deuteronomy*. Wilson wonders whether the author of Deuteronomy understood Yahweh's universal presence in heaven to be incompatible with a belief in his localized presence on earth. Such incompatibility is the conclusion of scholars like von Rad, who argue, for example, that only Yahweh's name dwelt in the temple. Yahweh's universal presence cannot be contained in one place.30 When the author of Deuteronomy spoke of Yahweh speaking mittōk hāʾēš, "out of the midst of the fire," did the author understand Yahweh to be mystically present within the fire, or did the fire simply serve as an earthly focus for a voice coming from heaven? Wilson makes a list of ten different passages in which the narrative of Deuteronomy records God's voice coming mittōk

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28 Richard C. Steiner, "דָּת and עֵין: Two Verbs Masquerading as Nouns in Moses' Blessing (Deuteronomy 33:2, 28)," *JBL* 115/4 (Winter, 1996), 694. Also see Miller, "Mythology," 257.


$hāʾēš$, "out of the midst of the fire."\textsuperscript{31} Comparing each of these to other examples of the use of *mittôk*, Wilson argues that Deuteronomy does indeed imagine Yahweh's localized presence on Mt. Horeb, and specifically localized in the fire.\textsuperscript{32} Wilson points repeatedly to the connection between this "manifesting fire" and the glowing divine cloud of priestly *kābôd* theology, which he believes to be the source of the image here.\textsuperscript{33} The preternatural fire in these passages enshrouds Yahweh whose active presence delivers Israel's law.

In his 2013 article on divine fire in Deuteronomy 33:2 and his forthcoming work on the religion of ancient Israel, Theodore Lewis musters evidence from text and iconography to support his claim that divine fire "is one of the most (the most?) enduring of images used by the authors of the Hebrew Bible to depict divine presence," and specifically the *active* divine presence.\textsuperscript{34} Lewis catalogs multiple "fiery transcendent anthropomorphisms," specifically, images of fire emanating from Yahweh, Yahweh flying in the midst of fire, fiery beings in Yahweh's retinue, and of the halo of fire surrounding divinities in Mesopotamia and Israel.\textsuperscript{35} These images, Lewis claims, symbolize supernatural activity, divine presence, energy, and speed.

Certain themes appear in this review of scholarship. First, one notices that biblical authors consistently drew on several traditional images in crafting their narratives of preternatural fire. As Miller first identified, some of these are images of divine


\textsuperscript{32} Wilson, *Out of the Midst*, 60-61.

\textsuperscript{33} Wilson, *Out of the Midst*, 61.

\textsuperscript{34} Lewis, "Divine Fire," 796-797.

\textsuperscript{35} Lewis, "Divine Fire," 797-803.
warfare, as Hendel, Steiner, and Lewis have also noted. Fire, especially lightning, is a weapon that Yahweh uses to protect his people and annihilate his enemies. Second, Miller, Hendel, and Lewis also recognize the importance of subordinate spiritual beings (divine attendants, *malʾākîm*, etc.) with a fiery nature whom Yahweh could send to do his bidding. Third, several scholars believe that many of these fiery images depend on a belief in a fire-cloud, the *kābôd* which enshrouded Yahweh, manifested his presence, and played an important role in Israel's understanding of the cult.

Similarly, images of preternatural fire in the Hebrew Bible symbolize two kinds of active divine presence. Miller, Weinfeld, Milgrom, Lewis, and Wilson recognized that fire manifested God's presence among his people. This could take the form of his leading Israel through the desert, his communicating with them, or his participation in the cult. Miller, Hendel, Steiner, and Lewis also identify another kind of active divine presence, Yahweh's wrath, which could be employed against Israel's enemies or against Israel itself. In either case, Yahweh's active presence on earth is revealed through images of fire. Of special note, Yahweh's active presence appears in written narratives as an entity that was hypostatized and symbolized by images of fire.

### III. This Study

This study focuses narrowly on the search for fire as a hypostasis of Yahweh. Specifically, it looks for narratives in which fire manifests an abstract quality of Yahweh that has achieved a degree of independence from him. One narrative in the Hebrew Bible seems to do this; the *lappîd ṣēš* in Genesis 15:17 is distinct from the Yahwistic *tannûr*, but it also seems to represent Yahweh's active presence in the narrative. The fire shows
its own identity even as it plays Yahweh's part in the ritual. The identification is only tentative, however, as the brief narrative leaves unclear exactly how distinct the *lappid 'ēš* is from Yahweh.

In general, the fire studied in this project shows qualities that can only be called preternatural. It burns without consuming fuel (Exodus 3:2). Elsewhere, it can even consume water-saturated wood and stone and even dust (1 Kings 18:38). Preternatural fire is capable of consuming whole nations (Amos 2:2). It falls in response to prayer (1 Kings 18:37-38, 1 Chronicles 21:26). It serves as a conduit for divine spirits (Judges 13:21). It appears mystically from a rock (Judges 6:20). It takes the form of a pillar (Exodus 13:21-22), a chariot (2 Kings 2:11-12, 6:17), or even the form of Yahweh's own body (Ezekiel 1:28). Preternatural fire provides a locus for divine speech (Deuteronomy 4:12) and it acts on its own to protect the sacredness of Yahweh's shrine (Leviticus 10:2). Although the writers of the Hebrew Bible called this phenomenon "fire," they attributed powers to it that no natural fire exhibits. Its preternatural qualities are what make it, to quote Rudolph Otto, a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, and thereby a useful religious symbol.

The present study will seek evidence for hypostatic fire by reviewing instances of preternatural fire in the Hebrew Bible. It will begin in the second chapter with a review of the history of scholarship on religious hypostases and the ways they appear in literature and cult as mediators of the divine presence. The second chapter will discuss two types of hypostases. Some hypostases are fully independent, having achieved a complete separation from their originating deity. Other hypostases are "semi-independent". Such hypostases are divine attributes that have developed a distinct
identity while still maintaining some kind of connection to the originating deity. The chapter will focus especially on these latter semi-independent hypostases, which are especially useful mediators of the divine presence given that they have the power both to "be" and "not be" the deity they represent.

The third chapter will analyze a number of narratives in which preternatural fire embodies Yahweh or accompanies him closely. Nearly all of these passages include a manifestation of Yahweh. Some of these manifestations are theophanies, especially storm theophanies. In others, the manifestation takes the form of the $kabôd-yhwh$, the "glory of Yahweh," a phenomenon which the chapter will discuss in detail. In still others, the only visual attribute of Yahweh's manifestation is fire. In each of these passages, meanwhile, Yahweh was acting to affect the outcome of the narrative. What the passages in this chapter reveal, then, is that fire very often accompanies Yahweh's "active" presence.

Does this active presence ever take on a distinct identity? And if so, is it embodied by fire? The fourth chapter will attempt to answer these questions by analyzing narratives in which Yahweh sends out fire to act on his behalf. Noteworthy in these passages is the way Yahweh remains in the distance; it is the fire that affects the outcome of the narrative, but always in accord with the divine will. The images in these passages take the form of elemental fire, fiery objects, and fiery beings. Although these act on Yahweh's behalf, only in Genesis 15:17 does the image appear to be a fiery embodiment of Yahweh's abstract active presence.

The fifth chapter will analyze the use of fire in descriptions of the Israelite cult. In these passages, fire is usually a sign of Yahweh's presence, but not an embodiment.
Fire sent out from Yahweh receives offerings on his behalf and protects the cult site. Cultic fire reveals but does not embody Yahweh's presence at the place of worship. Although cultic fire is a religiously complex phenomenon, no evidence suggests that it is a hypostasis of the active divine presence.

The final chapter will draw on the work of Gebhard Selz to organize these fiery images on a gradient. Selz argues that the Mesopotamian category "divinity" has "fuzzy boundaries," and that this allows objects or individuals to cross into the "divine" category to varying degrees. This variable participation Selz calls "functional" or "circumstantial" divinity. The degree to which the participation occurs falls along a gradient. At one end of the gradient appear images of preternatural fire as Yahweh himself, and at the other end are narratives in which the preternatural fire cannot possibly be Yahweh. At points in between, narratives appear that suggest a preternatural fire that "is-and-is-not" Yahweh to some degree. In only one of these narratives, Genesis 15:17, does the fiery image have the qualities of a hypostasis.

Such a paucity of results is not, in fact, a disappointing outcome to this research project. The passages studied herein reveal the diverse and creative ways that ancient authors attributed fire's ethereal qualities to Yahweh. Such qualities appealed especially to writers of deuteronomistic and priestly literature. Fire is immaterial yet perceptible, useful to humans yet untamed and potentially dangerous. It is a superb description of the all-powerful deity who interacted with history through covenant and cult. It is more for these reasons, and not any hypostatic considerations, that fire is one of the most common phenomena associated with Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible.

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CHAPTER 2

HYPOSTASES

I. Introduction

To reiterate the question driving this study, Lewis asks:

The above discussion forces us to address whether fire was ever used hypostatically. In other words, was fire personified to the point that it functioned as a surrogate for Yahweh that might also act independent of Yahweh? Or, are we working only in the realm of figurative or metaphorical language and we should not use such to reconstruct a pseudo-mythology that never existed in the minds of the ancients?  

Answering this question requires an understanding and definition of hypostases, a difficult concept. This chapter will review the scholarly discussion of hypostases, including those scholars who worked with the concept as well as those who have criticized it. It will conclude with a proposed definition of hypostases that accommodates the ideas of major proponents and addresses the concerns of the critics.

The God of the Hebrew Bible is a mysterious being, not least because of his many contradictory descriptions. Some authors describe him as a man (Genesis 18:1-2). Others describe him in human form, but with awe-inspiring qualities (Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26-28). Still others describe him as having wings (Psalm 63:8, 91:4). Some authors claim it is possible to speak to God face to face (Genesis 2:8, 18:3, 32:30; Exodus 33:11), while others claim such a thing is impossible or deadly (Exodus 33:20; Isaiah 45:15).

Some passages call him a king (Isaiah 6:5; Psalm 97:1), others a husband (Isaiah 54:4; Hosea 2:18), some a mother (Isaiah 42:14; 49:14-15, 66:13), or a father (2 Samuel 7:14). These are just some of paradoxes one encounters in the God in the Hebrew Bible.

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37 Theodore Lewis, The Religion of Ancient Israel (Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library; Yale University Press, forthcoming), chapter VII.
The nature of God's presence is likewise paradoxical. A very brief overview reveals that some texts state he is present in a certain sacred location, be it Zion (Amos 1:2; Psalm 65:2), Teman, (Habakkuk 3:3), or Bethel (Genesis 28:17, 31:13). Others state he lives in heaven (1 Kings 8:43; Psalm 2:4), or that heaven itself is to small to contain him (1 Kings 8:27). The divine realm was protected by distance (Genesis 28:12), taboo (Leviticus 16:2; Exodus 19:12), and destructive forces (Leviticus 10:2; Numbers 16:35). For some ancient religious writers, such complexity made it difficult to describe God's actual or physical presence at a cult site or even in a religious narrative. Ancient religious thinkers presented several solutions to this problem, including describing God in temporary human form (Genesis 18:3), showing God acting through mediating spirits (Numbers 22:31-35), or through dreams (1 Kings 3:5). In the cult, God's presence could be signified by a stone pillar (Genesis 28:22), by the cherubim throne (Isaiah 37:16), or the ark (Exodus 25:22).

In some narratives, a personified or substantivized divine attribute symbolizes God's presence. The attribute becomes the subject of the narrative, but all the while it mediates the divine presence, whose will is being accomplished. God's hand (Isaiah 41:20), God's wisdom (Proverbs 9:1), and God's anger (2 Samuel 24:1), and God's name (Isaiah 30:27), all appear as subjects to which God's actions are attributed. In the cult, meanwhile, certain ways of manifesting God's presence became so closely identified with God that texts record them to be divine phenomena. For example, the distinction between the divine cloud in Leviticus 16:2 and the priest's incense in Leviticus 16:13 is not entirely clear; the two phenomena blur together in the narrative. Sometimes such narrative personifications and cultic symbols take on a life of their own. For example,
God's anger seems to work in ignorance of God's actions (Numbers 22:20 vs. 31-35) or even in opposition to God (2 Samuel 24:1). Certain symbols that signified the divine presence became so closely identified with God that they may have received their own veneration (a list of these can be inferred from 2 Kings 18:4, and 23:6, 11). A hypostasis is such a narrative personification or cultic manifestation that mediates the presence of the deity in the text or the cult, and has taken on, either partially or completely, a life of its own.

II. Hypostases in Ancient Philosophy

The current understanding of religious hypostases is actually a modern development, the product of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule. These 19th and 20th century scholars, seeking the historical antecedents of Christianity, used this concept from Greek philosophy to describe a religious idea they encountered repeatedly in Hellenistic Judaism and early Christianity. When the second generation of religionsgeschichtliche scholars turned to the ancient Near Eastern texts that were coming to light at the same time, they also found there a number of religious ideas that were best understood with the language of hypostases. What follows is an outline of the discussion of this idea as it has unfolded over time.


39 The term religionsgeschichtliche Schule (history of religions school) describes the work of several scholars centered on Göttingen between 1895 and the Second World War. The first generation of scholars, which included Eichhorn, Gunkel, Wrede, and Bousset, focused their study primarily on Christianity as a product of Hellenistic Judaism, but they also recognized influences from Greco-Roman and Mesopotamian religious traditions. They eschewed a study of discrete theological statements or cultic practices, and instead sought a systematic understanding of early Christianity within the larger system of its antecedents and context. See Hendrikus Boers, "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule," Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 2:383-387.
The original Greek word, ὑπόστασις, is a substantive formed from the verb ὑφίστασθαι. The definition given in Liddell and Scott covers a lot of ground, including meanings such as "sediment (in wine)," "duration," "foundation, substructure," "real or specific nature," "substance," "rhetorical expansion," "plan, purpose," "property" and "inheritance." The philosophical tradition picked up on notions related to the definition "sediment in wine," and used the word hypostasis to mean both the process and the result of something coming into being. The English word "precipitation" has a similar pair of meanings, and illustrates this well. Precipitation can indicate a process by which a liquid is separated from a gas: *The precipitation of hydrochloric acid requires a lengthy cooling time.* It can indicate the result of such a process as well: *With the rain and the snow, a total of four inches of precipitation fell during the night.* Similarly, hypostasis can mean both the process of something coming into reality and the result of such a process.

Heinrich Dörrie traced the use of the word as it develops in Greek philosophy. Greek philosophers used it especially to indicate realization, reality, and existence. Stoic philosophers, for example, were the first to employ the term, using it to name the

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The LXX translators use the word exclusively in its non-philosophical senses. Hatch and Redpath list twelve Hebrew words that are rendered hypóstasis in the LXX: ἡλέδ (lifespan), γνώμη (knowledge), κίναα ([bundle of] possessions), μομάδ (foundation, foothold [of a deep mire]), μασάα (burden), various forms of the root ṃḥb, including the verbal forms ḫṣṣîb (setting [of goads]) and ḫṣṣ to be established), and the nouns massāb (garrison) and massēbā (pillar), sōd (council), ṛaṣ (the act of weaving), tōhelet and τιγά (hope), τοκάνα (structure), mihyā (support [of life]). Edwin Hatch and Henry A Redpath, et al., *A Concordance to the Septuagint* (Cambridge: Clarendon Press, 1906; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1417. See also T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Leuven: Peeters, 2009), 705, and T. Muraoka, *A Greek-Hebrew/Aramaic Two-Way Index to the Septuagint* (Leuven:Peeters, 2010), 122.


process of realization, specifically the process by which the perceptible qualities of an οὐσία manifest themselves out of the ὑποκεὶμενον, their name for the level of being imperceptible to the senses. As if they imagined sediment building up in a flask of wine, Stoic philosophers imagined an οὐσία taking form spontaneously out of something formless. Hypostatization was their word for this process.

Aristotelian philosophers, shying away from the notion of unseen realities, used the word "hypostasis" to indicate a manifest reality. They rejected the notion of an unseen realm of being, and understood an οὐσία to be something that could only exist in individuated material form. A hypostasis, in this case, was the Aristotelian substance under the οὐσία, to which "qualities, accidents, and relationships" adhere.

Middle Platonists and Neoplatonic philosophers used the word to describe a hierarchy of levels of existence. Rejecting Aristotelian physics, later Platonists instead understood the material world to be a dim reflection of a distant, singular οὐσία. This One source was the fullness of existence. It brought dependent phases of existence into being by projecting its own reflection outward. These dependent phases of existence were what later Platonists called hypostases. The first hypostasis was the reflection of the One οὐσία. The more distant hypostases were reflections of the next higher level of existence, ending with the material world that is perceptible to human senses. This cosmic hierarchy of hypostases underlay such Neoplatonic speculative texts as the Coptic Hypostasis of the Archons.

43 Dörrie, "Ὑπόστασις," 50.
44 Dörrie, "Ὑπόστασις," 60.
45 Dörrie, "Ὑπόστασις," 69.
Christian authors turned to Neoplatonic hypostases to work out the relationship of the members of the Trinity. The third-century theologian Origen was the first to employ the term systematically. Equating God the Father with the later Platonic οὐσία, Origen imagined God the Son to be "an eternal hypostasis" of the Father, i.e. an eternal and perfect reflection of the Father.⁴⁶ Athanasius, writing a century later, transformed this idea. In his theology, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are hypostases of a singular Godhead, ἡ θειότης, which is the Platonic οὐσία. At the same time, Athanasius introduced an equivalence between the οὐσία and its hypostases. He had a theological need to maintain the full divinity of each member of the Trinity, and as a result, his hypostases were not levels of dependent being, but were fully equal to the θειότης and to each other. To quote De Incarnatione, μία γὰρ ἡ θειότης καὶ ἓς θεὸς ἐν τρισὶν ὑποστάσεσιν.⁴⁷ Because Athanasius' theology became the orthodox Christian creed, the word hypostasis, in Christian sources, becomes a synonym for οὐσία.

III. Hypostases in Religionsgeschichtliche Studies

The word "hypostasis" retained these philosophical and theological senses until the nineteenth century, when scholars of the religionsgeschichtliche school took up the term to indicate a structure in religious thought they noticed repeatedly in Hellenistic Judaism, Greco-Roman and Mesopotamian religious traditions, and early Christianity. In these contexts, deities and demigods were often named after members, qualities, or attributes of other deities. Religionsgeschichtliche scholars called such deities

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⁴⁶ Origin, Peri Archon, I.ii.2, 6.
"hypostases" due to the use of the term among Greek scholars, especially Philo of Alexandria, to describe a being that took form out of a higher being.

The first religionsgeschichtliche scholar to take up a study of divine hypostases was Wilhelm Bousset in 1903, who was attempting to outline the historical context of early Christianity. Bousset focused primarily on the Judean religion of the Second Temple period (c. 500 BCE to 70 CE) and drew his evidence heavily from apocalyptic literature.48 The vast structure of heavenly courtiers he found in such literature indicated to him that Jews of the time held God to be remote, and only approachable through intermediaries. Looking specifically at one of these intermediaries he noted:

Die >>Hypostasen<< sind wie die Engel Mittelwesen zwischen Gott und Welt, die sein Wirken auf die Welt ermöglichen. Sie sind nur abstrakter, schemenhafter, schwerer zu fassen, als die derben und anschaulichen Gestalten des volkstümlichen Engelglaubens. Sie erscheinen also Mitteldinge zwischen Personen und abstrakten Wesen, nicht so losegelöst von Gott wie die konkreten Engelgestalten, mehr mit seinem Wesen verschmolzen und zu ihm gehörig, aber doch wieder gesondert gedacht, seltsame Zwitterbildungen eines kindlichen, zur vollen Abstraktion noch unfäigen Denkens.49

Bousset listed several characteristics that became important to the continued development of the idea. First, he noted that hypostases are a form of divine mediation. Yahweh appeared through his hypostases "die sein Wirken auf die Welt ermöglichen."

Second, they were abstract; they were more than simply concretizations, but they were not fully developed personalities either. If, on a continuum, God's "mighty hand and strong arm" are concretizations, while Raphael the archangel is a fully developed personality, then hypostases fall somewhere between. Third, they were at once separate

49 Bousset, Religion, 342-343.
from the deity, yet at the same time "mit seinem Wesen verschmolzen." The term "semi-independent hypostasis" will come to describe this "is-and-is-not" relationship between hypostases and the divinities from which they spring.

Writing in 1911, Oesterley and Box studied intermediate agencies between God and man in their *Religion and Worship of the Synagogue*. They defined a hypostasis as "a quasi-personification of certain attributes proper to God. These occupied an intermediate position between personalities and abstract beings." They called hypostases "quasi-personifications" because, like Bousset, they believed that, although a hypostasis may demonstrate a certain amount of independence from the deity to which it was related, it did not have a fully developed personality. Over time, they claimed, a hypostasis might develop a personality of its own and become fully independent. Their description of the development of God's *mēʾnraʾ* (word) illustrated this development nicely: "The word is represented as a divine power, working for the salvation of Israel; this divine power becomes developed into a Personality, who, as we have seen, occupies a position of mediator between God and His chosen people."

Oesterley and Box supposed that these complex relationships of distinction arose due to a presumed reticence on the part of Judean authors to attribute any action directly to the ineffably holy God. Thus Judean authors expressed God's actions as the acts of these mediating spirits. Oesterley and Box emphasized that supernatural beings like angels and heavenly spirits existed in Israelite lore before the development of hypostatic

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51 Oesterley and Box, *Synagogue*, 195.

52 Oesterley and Box, *Synagogue*, 209.

53 Oesterley and Box, *Synagogue*, 196.
mediating spirits. In their study of Metatron, however, they noted the repeated blurring of the older Israelite angel tradition with the developing Metatron tradition.\textsuperscript{54} Such blurring was not as clear in the case of three other later hypostatic intermediaries, specifically the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the Shekhinah. The role of these hypostatic intermediaries paralleled the role that angels and heavenly beings played in earlier biblical narratives.

George Foot Moore critiqued both \textit{Religion des Judentums} and \textit{Religion and Worship of the Synagogue} in a lengthy article for the \textit{Harvard Theological Review} entitled "Christian Writers on Judaism." He reviewed Bousset's work harshly, and focused on two interrelated problems. First, he declared Bousset's knowledge of Judaism to be of "negligible quantity," drawing heavily as it did on stereotypes and polemics.\textsuperscript{55} Second, he chastised Bousset for drawing heavily on apocalyptic literature and pseudepigraphal writings, while only casually citing rabbinic literature.\textsuperscript{56} Not only does this methodology ignore foundational Jewish texts, Moore argued, but an investigation that draws too heavily on visionary literature will inevitably overvalue an image of a majestically enthroned God, infinitely removed from mortals, who requires intermediaries to effect the divine will. This mythic setting is essential to the genre of visionary literature, but it should not have been taken to be a general statement of theology.\textsuperscript{57} Moore argued, essentially, that Bousset created a pseudo-mythology out of

\textsuperscript{54} Oesterley and Box, \textit{Synagogue}, 176-177.


\textsuperscript{56} Moore, "Christian Writers," 243.

\textsuperscript{57} Moore, "Christian Writers," 248.
figurative, metaphorical language. Bousset's treatment of hypostases (as well as his treatment of angels, demons, and monotheism in general) was thus fatally flawed.\footnote{Martin Hengel, writing in 1974, argues that Moore's criticism did not stand the test of time. He notes that the theological system of some of the Qumran documents contains a large number of mediating spirits. \textit{Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in the Early Hellenistic Period} (trans. J. Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), I.155.}

Moore's critique of Oesterley and Box followed similar lines. He credited them for avoiding Bousset's mistake of ignoring mainstream Jewish traditions and modern Jewish writers.\footnote{Moore, "Christian Writers," 248.} Yet according to Moore, they did not employ ancient sources with any degree of sophistication. For example, the use a purportedly ancient source that was clearly a medieval pseudepigrapha; they drew conclusions from a poor English translation of Deuteronomy 5:5, which they would have avoided if they had used the Hebrew. Finally, they used a corrupt Latin version of 2 Esdras (4 Ezra) 6:38, even though a critical correction of the text was available and clearly preferable.\footnote{Moore, "Christian Writers," 250.} Moore did not weigh in on the ideas of mediation and hypostases presented by Oesterley and Box, but his critique of their foundational texts implies that he found their conclusions on a whole untenable.

Writing in 1928 for the second edition of \textit{Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart}, Sigmund Mowinckel presented a definition of hypostases that rested on a wider comparative foundation. Although he did not respond directly to Moore, his analysis avoided the pitfalls of Bousset, Oesterley and Box. He defined a hypostasis thus:

\begin{quote}
Unter dem ursprünglich stoichen Terminus H. versteht man religionsgeschichtlich eine halb selbständige, halb als Offenbarungsform einer höheren Gottheit betrachtete göttliche Wesenheit, die eine
\end{quote}
Mowinckel had his own idea of the "is-and-is-not" nature of hypostases. A hypostasis was a manifestation of a higher deity on the one hand, but because it represented only one "property" or "member" of a complex and mysterious higher deity, it appeared at least in part to be an independent divine being. Mowinckel argued that hypostases existed because believers found divinity to be an utterly mysterious presence. To a pious believer, a divinity appeared as something constantly shifting in its modes of being, moods, and means of interaction. Yet at the same time, aspects of that divinity appear unchanged, universal, and eternal. Pious believers could not apprehend the mystery of the eternal deity, so they appealed instead to the attribute to which they hoped to have access: "Sende deine Gerechtigkeit mich zu retten!" In this way, Mowinckel claimed, hypostases are not fully personalized or fully deified beings: "[Sie] nur im Schatten einer höheren Gottheit leben." Mowinckel found little evidence that hypostases had their own myth or their own cult. Drawing on his example, "Sende deine Gerechtigkeit mich zu retten!" one can conclude that a worshipper could have prayed for a hypostasis, it was rare that a worshipper prayed to a hypostasis; the prayer was addressed to the deity whose attribute the hypostasis was.

Mowinckel treated hypostases as an essential feature of human religion. He cited the Greek *thumos*, the Egyptian *ka*, the Norse *hamingja*, and the Hebrew *lēb* and *nefesh*

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61 Sigmund Mowinckel, "Hypostasen," *RGG*² (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1928), col. 2065.


63 Mowinckel, "Hypostasen," col. 2065.
as examples of hypostases cropping up in disparate religious expressions. 64 Specific to the ancient Near East, he listed Mišaru (Justice), Kittu (Right), and Tašmētu (the act of being heard, mercy) as obvious hypostases from Mesopotamia, Συδύκ (righteousness) and Μισαρ (Justice) from Phoenicia, the eight hypostases of Ptah in Memphite theology, the Persian hwarena (the king's glory, to which sacrifices were sometimes made), and the Punic Astarte and Tanit, who were known respectively as the "Name of Ba'al" and the "Face of Ba'al." 65

Sigmund Mowinckel went on to assert that later Near Eastern and Hellenistic religious systems had similar divine beings. Manichaeism held the five cosmic virtues, gentleness, knowledge, understanding, mystery and insight to be the hypostatized limbs of the King of Paradise. Zoroastrianism treated the Amesha Spentas as hypostatized virtues that function as divinized cosmic powers. In addition, Mowinckel listed the Holy Spirit of Judaism and Christianity, the Aeons of the Gnostics, the Nous of the Pythagoreans, and the logos of the Stoics as further examples of this structure of human religion appearing across a variety of cultural expressions. 66

According to Mowinckel, these hypostases once represented an aspect of a higher divinity, a "property, efficacy, member, or section" that was requested in prayer and felt to be efficacious. It is important to note here that the property, efficacy, member, or

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64 Mowinckel, "Hypostasen," col. 2065.

65 Sigmund Mowinckel, He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism (trans. G. W. Anderson; Han som kommer : Messiasforventningen i Det gamle testament og på Jesu tid (1951) Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005 [Norwegian 1951, first English printing 1954]), 375 n.1. In his RGG2 article, Mowinckel gives the Greek words for the Phoenician religious terms Συδύκ (righteousness) and Μισαρ (Justice). His primary source for these ideas was the text of Greco-Roman author Philo of Byblos preserved in Eusebius' Preparatio Evangelica, I, 10, 13. (SC 206, 192).

section was never at this stage itself addressed in prayer. The prayer was directed at the higher deity with the request that he or she send out the requested property, efficacy, member, or section, e.g. "Sende deine Gerechtigkeit mich zu retten!" The actualized attribute manifested the presence of the mysterious divinity on the one hand and became a focus of its own religious attention on the other. Mowinckel believed that sometimes this attribute developed its own cult and myth, especially if the hypostasis merged with a previously known deity. Such a process, he suggested, lay behind the divinized hypostasis in Zoroastrianism known as Spenta Armaiti, whose imagery had merged with an old Persian earth-mother goddess. Mowinckel also notes that some hypostases represented ancient or foreign deities that were later subordinated to a high god. He believed examples of this appear in Egyptian religion and the angelology of Second Temple Judaism.67

Looking at similarities and differences between Mowinckel and his predecessors, Mowinckel did not attribute the development of hypostases to a deterioration of Jewish religion, as did Bousset. Instead his comparative study of religions demonstrated that hypostases are a religious idea found across human cultures, including ancient Israel. Also unlike Bousset, Mowinckel did not believe that hypostases are primarily found in Second Temple Judaism. He found them even in narratives believed to be from early Israel. He noted especially that the editors of the J and E sources sometimes mentioned manifestations of Yahweh and a malʾāk simultaneously, as if the presence of the one implied the presence of the other.

67 This tendency has already been observed by Bousset, Oesterley and Box who noted the blurring of the "First Temple angel tradition" with the Second Temple Metatron tradition, and, as will be discussed in chapter 4, pg. 155, when ideas about the fiery substance that was a part of Yahweh merged with Canaanite traditions of fiery divine attendants.
Like Bousset, Mowinckel understood hypostases to be a form of divine mediation. He stressed their revelatory nature and also emphasized their abstract ("shadowy") nature. They are not fully independent beings that one invoked directly. Also, like Bousset, Mowinckel noted the lack of a clear distinction between the divinity and the hypostatic manifestation. Hypostases are divine qualities that can be sent out to accomplish the divine will, but they do not seem to maintain an independent existence after their task is complete. Such a description is also reminiscent of the unnamed *mal’ak yhwh* of First Temple Judaism.

Writing in 1947, Helmer Ringgren synthesized a definition of hypostasis from both Oesterley-Box and Mowinckel. Drawing from the former, he stated that a hypostasis is a "quasi-personification of certain attributes proper to God, occupying an intermediate position between personalities and abstract beings." Drawing from Mowinckel, he stated that hypostases represent "a personification of qualities, functions, limbs, etc., of a higher god." Ringgren added, however, that "the personal nature must not be stressed too much. In fact there are cases when a divine quality is spoken of as an independent entity without being personified," and thus, "the result of a personification is not always a hypostasis." He took great care in his work to separate hypostatic images from mere personifications and metaphors.

Ringgren’s interest was to show how monotheism developed over time into polytheism. He wrote specifically to counter claims that the "natural" evolution of religion is from a primitive polytheism toward monotheism. He argued the opposite:

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primitive religions worshipping a single god over time developed subordinate deities out of the high god's powers, qualities, and limbs. Thus Ringgren's interest was the relationship of "high gods" to deities whose names denoted "qualities or functions." 70 The religions of the ancient Near East gave him several examples of subordinate deities whose named after qualities and functions of a higher deity, but who have their own mythos and cult.

The Egyptian gods Hu and Sia, whose names mean "Word" and "Understanding," were his first example. 71 Ringgren found clues in Egyptian texts that indicate that Hu and Sia began as the word and understanding of Re. Over time, Re's word and understanding were personified, and became members of Re's entourage. 72 In later texts, these two deities were part of the entourage of Isis or Hathor, or were simply independent deities whose names appeared in lists of "soul-weighers." 73 The development of Hu and Sia from attributes to deities revealed the full process of hypostatization: Re's word and understanding were first personified as members of his entourage, then conceptually defined as minor deities who could be associated with other deities, and finally accepted as independent gods who undertook their own divine activity (soul weighing) and received their own cult. 74

70 Ringgren, Word and Wisdom, 8.
71 Ringgren, Word and Wisdom, 10.
72 Ringgren, Word and Wisdom, 25.
74 It should be noted that this process is Ringgren's own hypothetical reconstruction. Hu and Sia are already fully developed deities as early as the Pyramid Texts of the Old Kingdom (e.g. PT 251, PT 697). Ringgren only notes that in Old Kingdom texts these deities are associated primarily with Re-Atum, but that by the New Kingdom, their association with multiple deities demonstrates their independence from Re-Atum.
Ringgren saw a similar process at work in the development of Hike (Heka), the god of magic,\textsuperscript{75} in the fourteen \textit{kas} of Re,\textsuperscript{76} and in the goddess Maat,\textsuperscript{77} who in early texts was called the "life of the sun god" but later was called the daughter of Re, the friend of Amun, the beloved of Ptah, and the wife of Thoth. In each case a quality or function of one god took on an independent existence, which is illustrated by the new deity's independence of action or association with other gods.

Ringgren found the same process at work in Mesopotamian and Canaanite religion. The Mesopotamian deities Mēšaru and Kettu for example, represented at first the "righteousness" and "justice" of the sun-god Šamaš. Over time they were personified, and identified as the sun-god's sons and retainers. Ringgren argued that the worship they themselves received indicated that that they were fully deified personifications.\textsuperscript{78} He also found evidence that the god Nabû's divine consort Tašmētu, whose name meant "hearing, mercy," began her existence as the personification of Nabû's mercy, but later received her own cult.\textsuperscript{79} Likewise Ringgren drew on Dürr's work to show that a divine "Word" was perceived to be a concrete thing, having existence separate from the deity that utters it.\textsuperscript{80}

At Ugarit, the names šlm il, ḫnn il, nṣbt il, Ringgren contended, are personified or hypostatized qualities of El, although he did not believe enough evidence existed to make

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} Ringgren, \textit{Word and Wisdom}, 36-37.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ringgren, \textit{Word and Wisdom}, 43-44.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Ringgren, \textit{Word and Wisdom}, 49-50.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ringgren, \textit{Word and Wisdom}, 53-56.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Ringgren, \textit{Word and Wisdom}, 60-62.
\end{itemize}
the same claim for šdīk il, and yšr il.81 Finally, the daughters of the storm god Ba’lu, ārṣy, ṭly, and pdry, appeared to be aspects of the storm god who, over time, developed their own personal characteristics and received their own cult.82

Ringgren focused on several Israelite hypostases as well. He devoted by far the most attention to ḥokmā (wisdom) which he contended was sometimes a hypostasis and sometimes not. For example, in Job 28, the apocryphal 1 Enoch, and the deuterocanonical Wisdom of Solomon, ḥokmā was not a hypostasis. It had no independent characteristics and never spoke with its own voice or acts with its own will.83 In Proverbs 8:22 - 9:6, Ringgren argued that the biblical author described personified Wisdom with enough personal traits and enough distinct will that "she" was here demonstrably a "concrete being, self-existent beside God."84

The fact that Wisdom called herself an ʿāmôn (craftsman) in Proverbs 8:30 was just further evidence for Ringgren that ḥokmā was considered to be concrete and self-existent.85 Israelite hypostatic Wisdom took on the character of a self-existent personal

81 Ringgren, Word and Wisdom, 78, 82, citing the deity list in KTU 1.65. For more recent studies of KTU 1.65, see Mark S. Smith, Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 76-77, and Dennis Pardee, Ritual and Cult at Ugarit (WAW 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 21-24.


Ringgren also reviews the admittedly scanty evidence from pre-Islamic Arabia and asserts that Manat, "Fate" is a hypostasis of Allah "split off from its originator and developed into a self-existent goddess." 185.

83 Certain instances hint at this, but the imagery is not consistent; Ringgren, Word and Wisdom, 95, 119, 122.

84 Ringgren, Word and Wisdom, 104.
being over time as it drew on aspects of Ishtar, Gnostic Sophia, Akkadian Tree of Life and Water of Life images, Isis, and Greek philosophical speculation. In spite of its growing independence from the God of Israel, at no point did it ever receive cult.

Ralph Marcus reviewed Ringgren's work in 1950. He focused his critique specifically on the longest part of Ringgren's work, his discussion of hypostatized Wisdom. Although he was complimentary of Ringgren's erudition and scholarship, he suggests that Ringgren overlooked a simpler explanation for the relationship of Wisdom to God. Simply put, Marcus contended that Wisdom was nothing more than a poetic personification of the Torah. Ringgren, for example argued that, when in Proverbs 8:30 Wisdom claimed to be the craftsman, the 'ummān (MT 'āmōn) through whom God creates the universe, the author of Proverbs understood Wisdom to be something separate from God. Marcus countered that the 'ummān appeared in the Bereshit Rabbah as a metaphor for Wisdom, and that both were metaphors for Torah: "In the same way the Holy One, blessed be He, looked into the Torah [here identified with Ḥokhmah] and created the world." Further, Marcus argued, Ringgren was guilty of overreach in his claim that Sirach spoke of hypostasized Wisdom when he wrote that "those who serve her [Wisdom] serve the Holy One." The passage has a simpler interpretation, Marcus claims: those who serve the Torah serve the Holy One. In this text, wisdom was not a

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85 Ringgren, *Word and Wisdom*, 103. Ringgren argues here that the Hebrew 728 is a loanword based on the Akkadian 'ummān. He re-vocalizes the Hebrew as 'ummān throughout his discussion. Although this vocalization was also followed by Ralph Marcus in the article discussed below, it is no longer common.


88 Marcus, "Wisdom," 166.

89 Marcus, "Wisdom," 166, n. 18. Marcus follows Ringgren's reading of 'ummān for MT 'āmōn.
personification but rather the means by which God and a believer could enter into relationship. Finally, in focusing only on selected texts, Ringgren overlooked the wider body of Israelite Wisdom literature, which according to Marcus, limited Ringgren's sensitivity to nuances of the wisdom tradition.90

IV. The Discussion of Hypostases Since Ringgren

A. Continuing Elaborations of the Argument

Writing in 1967, G. Pfeifer looked at the role of hypostases in the religious life of Hellenistic Judaism. He presented a new definition of hypostases, which he contended was more suited to the monotheism of the Hebrew Bible. A hypostasis is: "eine Größe, die teilhat am Wesen einer Gottheit, die durch sie handelnd in die Welt eingreift, ohne daß sich ihr Wesen im Wirken dieser Hypostase erschöpft."91 Pfeifer's definition contained his own version of the "is-and-is-not" nature of hypostases. A hypostasis participated in the nature of the deity without exhausting the deity's essence. According to Pfeifer, biblical thinkers found in hypostases a way to tie together Yahweh's universal transcendence with instances of divine action at a certain time and multiple places. Hypostases mediated the divine presence in a certain time and place without calling into question the deity's personal unity or the supremacy of one cult site over other places of revelation.

90 Marcus, "Wisdom," 167.

In the main body of his work, Pfeifer analyzed 106 pre- and post-exilic instances of immanent divine action, both within and outside the biblical canon. After looking at these instances individually, and again with attention ancient Near Eastern sources and parallels, he concluded that, although hypostases do appear in ancient Israelite and Jewish thought, they are not a central religious idea. He found only 37 descriptions of a being that fits his "mediatory" definition of a hypostasis and most of these "stehen am Rande und haben kein großes Gewicht."\(^92\) Seven instances, however, each drawn from a wisdom text, contained hypostases that were both essential and mediatory.\(^93\) Hypostases, he concluded, were known but not common in Second Temple literature.\(^94\)

S. Dean McBride in his 1969 dissertation "The Deuteronomic Name Theology" used the tradition of hypostases to explain the role of the divine šēm in Israelite thought, especially of the Deuteronomistic traditions. He took his definition of hypostasis from both Ringgren and Mowinckel:

Specifically by "hypostasis" is meant a quality, epithet, attribute, manifestation or the like of a deity which through a process of personification and differentiation has become a distinct (if not fully independent) divine being in its own right.\(^95\)

Although portions of Ringgren's and Mowinckel's definitions that McBride used focused more on the process of hypostatic differentiation than on hypostatic mediation, the latter was essential to McBride's argument. He studied the ways that the divine name

\(^{92}\) Pfeifer, *Ursprung*, 102-103.

\(^{93}\) Job 28:1-28; Proverbs 8:22-31; Sirach 24:1-29; Ethiopic Enoch (1 Enoch) 42:1-2; Baruch 3:9 - 4:4; Wisdom 7-10, according to Philo; Slavonic Enoch (2 Enoch) 30:8, 33:4.

\(^{94}\) Summarizing Pfeifer, Martin Hengel concludes that hypostases were never objects of devotion, but instead were religious images considered in pious reflection. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:155. The Roman Catholic tradition of the Sacred Heart would appear to be a modern-day example of such an image of pious reflection.

\(^{95}\) S. Dean McBride, "The Deuteronomic Name Theology," (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1969), 5.
made a deity present in a specific cult space. Regular invocation of a divine name at a
certain place often gave rise to a distinct cult, which McBride defines as "rituals and
myths... priesthood and sacrificial system, and especially its physical paraphernalia." 96
The cultic activity that surrounded the invocation of a divine name was established a
place in which the deity's presence could be continuously encountered.

The association of a divine name with a cult-site made the place "vibrant with the
power and presence of the god whose name was associated with it." 97 The association
was so strong that the divine presence and the divine name were thought to be essentially
the same thing. One only needs to look at Psalm 116:17-19 for an illustration of an
invocation of the divine name within a complex of cultic activity:

\[
\text{To you I will slaughter a sacrifice of thanksgiving,}
\text{and on the name of Yahweh I will call.}
\text{My vows to Yahweh I will fulfill}
\text{in the presence of all his people,}
\text{In the courts of the house of Yahweh}
\text{in your midst, O Jerusalem.}
\]

The psalmist listed an invocation of the divine name along with sacrifice and vows as
cultic activity appropriate to the courts of the temple of Jerusalem. The switch of
grammatical number in Psalm 116:17 is noteworthy. The psalmist addresses Yahweh in
the second person, \( lōkā-ʼezbāh ἱεβάθ ὁτά \), "To you I will slaughter a sacrifice of

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{To you I will slaughter a sacrifice of thanksgiving,} \\
\text{and on the name of Yahweh I will call.} \\
\text{My vows to Yahweh I will fulfill} \\
\text{in the presence of all his people,} \\
\text{In the courts of the house of Yahweh} \\
\text{in your midst, O Jerusalem.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[96\text{McBride, "Name," 119.}\]
\[97\text{McBride, "Name," 120.}\]
thanksgiving," but then switches to the third person when mentioning the name: ḫwšēm yhwh 'eqrā', "and on the name of Yahweh I will call." The distinction is subtle, and the mix of grammatical number in 116:17-19 is complex. The shift in grammatical number in 116:17 suggests that the psalmist considered Yahweh's name to be independent of Yahweh to such an extent that speech directed to Yahweh is not the same as speech directed to the name of Yahweh.

The identity of the divine presence and the divine name in the Jerusalem temple comes through in passages like 1 Kings 5:19 (Eng. 1 Kings 5:5):


I intend to build a house for the name of Yahweh my god, just as Yahweh said to David my father, saying, "Your son, whom I will place on your throne after you, is the one who will build a house for my name.

The importance of Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem, according to 1 Kings 5:19, was that it was a bayit for Yahweh's šēm. 98 This reflects McBride's statement, that any memorial associated with a divine name is "vibrant with the power" of the deity.

Psalm 7:18 shows language that implies a certain parallelism between Yahweh and his name. The praise given to the šēm of Yahweh is parallel to the praise given to Yahweh himself:


I will praise Yahweh according to his righteousness
I will extol the name of Yahweh, the most high.

98 Similar language appears in 1 Kings 3:2; 1 Kings 5:3; 1 Kings 8:17-20; 1 Chronicles 22:7, 19; 2 Chronicles 2:1, 4; 6:7, 10. In Isaiah 59:19, the divine šēm is in parallel with Yahweh's kābōd.
As in Psalm 116:17, the language of the passage implies a distinction between Yahweh and the name of Yahweh. In Psalm 7:18, the praise has a single destination, Yahweh, but it reaches him via two paths. In the first, direct, route, the praise is given directly to him. In the second, the šēm-yhwh receives praise, but only as an intermediary. In both cases, Yahweh is the sole intended recipient of the praise. This is also the case in Psalm 135:3-4:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{halōlū yāh kī tōb yhwh} \\
\text{zammorū lišmō kī nāʾîm} \\
\text{kī-yaʾagôb bāhar lō yāh} \\
\text{yišrāʾ ēl līsgullātō}
\end{align*}
\]

Praise Yahweh, for Yahweh is good.  
Sing to his name that is delightful.  
For Yahweh has chosen Jacob for himself.  
Israel for his possession.

The language of psalm 135:3 includes a dual invocation, to praise Yahweh and sing to his name. Only one recipient of such praise is intended, as is strongly implied by Psalm 135:4, in which Yahweh acts alone in having chosen Jacob/Israel. Again, the praise is given to Yahweh directly and also through the mediation of his šēm. Although cultic prayers are directed to the šēm yhwh, they are intended for Yahweh himself.

According to McBride, "in the [Deuteronomistic Name Theology], the divine šēm is conceived as God's counterpart, a real 'presence' existing at the sanctuary." This real presence acted as a mediator, receiving worship and conferring it to Yahweh. Although certain traditions speak of a plurality of other places at which one could invoke Yahweh's šēm (e.g., 1 Kings 18:24), Deuteronomistic authors stressed that there was only one place Yahweh willed for his hypostatic šēm to be invoked and his presence to be maintained.

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and that was in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{100} According to McBride this was a double "corrective." The only legitimate cult site was Jerusalem, but at the same time, Yahweh himself could not be contained by the Jerusalem temple. Instead, Yahweh placed his hypostatic \textit{šēm} in the temple, and this was the agency through which the divine presence was manifest.\textsuperscript{101} McBride called it a "semi-hypostasis,"\textsuperscript{102} indicating that Yahweh's \textit{šēm} had become distinct, but not completely independent from him (contrasting to the way, for example, that Heka became fully independent of Atum).\textsuperscript{103} McBride indicated too that this unseen \textit{šēm} could have been coupled with a physical "name" among the cultic paraphernalia of the temple, likely an inscription of the divine name on a plaque or stele.\textsuperscript{104}

For the purposes of this study, the most important contribution of McBride is his realization that Yahweh's hypostatic \textit{šēm} was another way of naming his immanent divine presence at a cult site. In a way that reflected Pfeifer's reasoning, McBride argued that the hypostasis allows the immanent localization of an otherwise universal and seemingly transcendent deity. The place at which Yahweh desired his \textit{šēm} to be invoked

\textsuperscript{100} McBride, "Name," 125.

\textsuperscript{101} McBride, "Name," 186

\textsuperscript{102} McBride, "Name," 193.

\textsuperscript{103} See pgs. 32-34.

\textsuperscript{104} McBride, "Name," 193. McBride's thesis was challenged by Sandra L. Richter in her Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: \textit{lāššakkēn šāmō šām in the Bible and the Ancient Near East} (BZAW 318; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2002). She argues that Deuteronomic authors adapted the phrase \textit{lāššakkēn šāmō šām} from the Akkadian \textit{šuma ūakānu}. The Akkadian phrase described the raising of a monumental royal inscription to indicate royal possession of a conquered territory. Richter demonstrates that this Mesopotamian royal propaganda was also known in the Levant. She argues that Deuteronomic authors employed it to describe the temple as Yahweh's monument to his conquest and ownership of the land of Israel. Thus, she concludes, it has "nothing to do with the reinterpretation of the mode of divine presence at the cult site" (216). Although such an argument brings a fresh perspective on the relationship of Yahweh's \textit{šēm} to the Jerusalem temple, it does not address descriptions like the one in Isaiah 30:27, in which Yahweh's \textit{šēm} comes from a distance amid storm-related imagery, or epithets like \textit{šm būl} in Ugaritic literature. Lewis discusses the incantatory uses of epithet \textit{šm būl} in "'Athartu’s Incantations and the Use of Divine Names as Weapons," JNES 70/2 (2011): 224-225.
was, in the minds of some ancient Yahwists, the place where Yahweh had made his name dwell. Worship at the place of the name was worship of both the universal Yahweh and the localized šēm, "presence," of Yahweh. In the religious imagination of several psalms, the šēm was a mediator, receiving worship intended for Yahweh, even as the psalmist mentioned worship offered directly to Yahweh himself. In this way, the šēm yhwh both was and was not Yahweh.

Such an insight reflects a conclusion McCarter drew in his "Aspects of the Religion of the Israelite Monarchy: Biblical and Epigraphic Data." In which he demonstrated that a hypostasis in ancient Israel represented the "cultically available presence" of a deity in the temple, an idea he developed his discussion of the āšērā. The word āšērā, he pointed out, sometimes described the Canaanite goddess (e.g. the nōbīʾē hāʾāšērā ʾarbaʾ mēʾōt mentioned in I Kings 18:19). Sometimes āšērā referred to a wooden object. It is something that can be planted (Deuteronomy 16:21), it stood upright (2 Kings 13:6; Isaiah 27:7), it could be uprooted (Micah 5:13), cut down (Exodus 34:13), hewn to pieces (Deuteronomy 7:5), and burnt (2 Kings 23:4). The wood of the āšērā was fuel for the offering described in Judges 6:26. This wooden object, McCarter contended, was an element of many Yahwistic cult places.

The word āšērā appeared in two contexts that indicated its employment as a cult object. First, in biblical descriptions it was sometimes paired with another cultic

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installation, the massēbâ a stone pillar or stele. In 2 Kings 18:14, for example, King Hezekiah "shattered the pillars and cut down the asherah." Second, in an inscription from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, one found the phrase lôYhwh šōmrôn ûlô’āšērātô which means "To Yahweh of Samaria and to his ‘āšērā." McCarter believed this phrase referred not to a goddess but to a cultic object.

McCarter does not go into detail, but the Hebrew scriptures suggest that this cultic object may have received cult of its own. References are scarce; most mentions of hā’āšērā appear amid other things that received cult, but do not mention cult given to hā’āšērā (e.g., 2 Kings 21:3). In 2 Kings 23:4, however, Josiah commands that the purging of the Jerusalem temple include kol-hakkēlîm hā’āšûyîm labba’al wəlā’āšērā, "all the vessels made for the ba’al and for the ‘āšērā. The need for these vessels suggests that some kind of offering was given to the ‘āšērā.

The Kuntillet ‘Ajrud text, McCarter argued, followed a well-attested pattern in Northwest Semitic religion wherein the temple precinct and its aspects were personified and worshipped. The Aramaic deity *bayt-’el, for example, was one example of a deified temple precinct. The Hebrew form of the same divine name, bêt-’ēl (English "Bethel") appears in Jeremiah 48:13. Divinized temple precincts appeared in the


110 McCarter, "Aspects," 147. McBride also noted the importance of the cult site to the enduring presence of the deity (McBride, "Name," 119).


112 The name is also given to the northern cult site, Bethel (Genesis 28:17, 22; 1 Kings 12:29; etc).
Elephantine papyri as well, where the name Bethel served as a synecdoche for Yahweh. It also provided the theophoric element to a number of divine names, specifically hrmbyt’l (the sacredness of the temple), ’šmbyt’l (the name of the temple), ’ntbyt’l (the sign of the temple).\textsuperscript{113} In each of these names, a quality or feature of the temple was given concrete substance. Such substantivization of a divine quality or feature (the divine house serving here as a manifestation of the deity) accords with the basic definition of a hypostasis.\textsuperscript{114}

McCarter also pointed out that the name ’ntbyt’l appears elsewhere at Elephantine as ’ntyhw, i.e. ’ānat yāhû, which he takes to mean "the Anat (sign) of Yahweh." McCarter believed this to be a parallel expression to the expression ’šrth found at Kuntillet ’Ajrud: "the expression ’āšērat yahweh (the asherah of Yahweh), implied by ’āšēratô (his asherah) in the Kuntillet ’Ajrud texts is precisely analogous to ’ānat yāhû in the Elephantine papyri."\textsuperscript{115}

These personified and divinized cult concepts, McCarter noted, also appear as female deities in Ugaritic religion.\textsuperscript{116} Anat began as a "sign" of a god's presence (McCarter proposes Ba’al Zaphon) in the cult site. Over time Ba’al 's "sign" took on a significance of its own in the minds of worshippers, first as a hypostasis, then as a personification, and finally as a goddess in her own right. McCarter points to Aṯtart, who

\textsuperscript{113} The etymology of the name 'Anat is uncertain, and few scholars follow McCarter in rendering 'nt as "sign." Albright, for example, argued that 'nt meant "providence." See W. F. Albright, "The Development of the West-Semitic Divinity 'An-'Anat-’Attâ," \textit{American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures} 41/2 (1925): 95-96. For more possibilities, \textit{HALOT} directs readers to R. de Vaux, \textit{Histoire ancienne d’Israël} (2 vols.; Paris: Lecoffre, 1971) 2:127f. The ambiguity of the meaning of 'nt does not weaken McCarter's argument that 'ntyhw = 'ntbyt, or that such an expression helps to understanding the meaning of 'šrth at Kuntillet ’Ajrud.

\textsuperscript{114} McCarter, "Aspects," 147. See also Mowinckel, "Hypostasen," \textit{RGG²}, col. 2065.

\textsuperscript{115} McCarter, "Aspects," 148.

\textsuperscript{116} McCarter, "Aspects," 148.
was at Ugarit called šm b’l "the name of Ba’lu", as another example of a female deity with a hypostatic relationship to a male deity.

McCarter noted that the name ūšērā was related to the Akkadian ešertu, meaning "track, tread, trace." He reasoned that the expression "his asherah" referred to the hypostatized "trace" of Yahweh, which was a way of describing his "cultically available presence." The wooden ūšērā symbolized the presence. The hypostasized presence did not inhabit the wood. Rather, the wood was a physical object that symbolized the unseen hypostatized "Presence".

In the cult Yahweh's ūšērā, his trace, sign, or effective presence, was marked with an upright wooden pole, called an asherah, which, along with an altar, a massēbāt, and other objects, constituted his sanctuary. At the same time, the ūšērā - the "trace" of Yahweh in the cult - was attributed substance, personified, and worshiped as a hypostatic personality.

McCarter reasoned that these hypostases were the answer to a question, specifically, "How can a being who has his existence in the divine realm be available for worship in the human realm?" This question also addressed the problem of a singular deity who could be present simultaneously at multiple cult sites. It was the hypostatized "presence" of the deity, his name or sign, that was available in one or more temples and the focus of worship.

In his second article on the topic of hypostases, McCarter studied the way that Yahweh's anger developed over time to be something with its own individual will,

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separate from the will of Yahweh. McCarter noted that in Exodus 32:7-14, Yahweh spoke of his own anger as something separate from himself.\textsuperscript{121} McCarter also noted that anger was something that could be dispatched as an agent of destruction, as it was in Psalm 78:49-50.\textsuperscript{122} Furthermore, divine anger had a role in the protection and enforcement of the cult.\textsuperscript{123} Such divine anger burned against Israel in Joshua 7:1, when Achan violated the ḥērem. It appeared again in 2 Sam 6:6-7 (and the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 13:9-10), in the narrative of the transfer of the ark from Baale-Judah to Jerusalem. The Levite Uzzah stretched out his hand to steady the ark and was struck dead by divine wrath. Although his intention was pious, it was cultically inappropriate for him to touch the ark, and therefore divine wrath acted to protect the ark from profanation. This narrative too reflected the episode of the quail found in Numbers 11:31-33. It is not entirely clear from the text what sin had been committed. In any case, there too the anger of Yahweh was kindled against individuals who had unwittingly violated his divine majesty, although McCarter stated that the punishment was attributed to Yahweh himself, not to his wrath acting on its own. In Numbers 35:3-4, Yahweh spoke of his anger as something nearly independent of him, when he taught Moses how to protect Israel from it after the incident at Baal Peor.\textsuperscript{124}

Yahweh's wrath took on independence in two narratives. The first is Numbers 22:20-35; McCarter noted that the anger of Yahweh appears as a malʾāk that acts a śāṭān

\begin{footnotes}
\item[122] McCarter, "Rage," 87.
\item[124] McCarter, "Rage," 89.
\end{footnotes}
to Balaam. It would have killed Balaam were it not for the protection of the donkey.
God's will in this case was served by the donkey, not by the mal’āk whose murderous wrath (though working to protect Israel) would have run counter to Yahweh's purpose.125 The fact that the mal’āk did not seem to know of Balaam's dream also indicates that the wrath of God was not privy to the mind of God, although this is glossed over when the mal’āk repeats the instructions of the dream. The second such narrative appears in 1 Samuel 24. McCarter argued here divine wrath took on the nature of a true hypostasis when it tempted David to take a census, in violation of Yahwistic precepts. In tempting David to sin, Yahweh's wrath acted out of accord with the will of Yahweh, thereby displaying its independence from him.126 It is not surprising that the later retelling of this story in 1 Chronicles 21:1 changed the phrase "Wrath of Yahweh" to śāṭān, completing the separation of Yahweh and beings of wrath.

B. Continuing Critiques of the Idea

Criticism of hypostases as a tool for understanding biblical religion continues. In 1988, Larry Hurtado criticized the use of the idea of hypostases to understand biblical imagery from the Second Temple period.127 He argued first that many early scholarly descriptions of hypostases were subverted by later scholarship.128 He also drew on Pfeiffer to demonstrate that the influence of these putatively hypostatic beings on the

125 McCarter, "Rage," 89-90.
126 McCarter, "Rage," 91.
128 Hurtado, One God, 36. Although he does not here mention Marcus's response to Ringgren on the topic of Wisdom, that is certainly an example.
course of Jewish thought is overstated.\textsuperscript{129} Hurtado concluded that the entire discussion of hypostases is unhelpful as a category of inquiry.

In fact, Hurtado contended that the discussion of hypostases has been the result of a mistake, the failure to understand the "vivid idiom of ancient Jewish expression." The rich personification of Wisdom, for example, is not an ontological claim of (semi-)independence from God, but rather a glorification "of the obligations of the Torah, by making them the essence of heavenly Wisdom, thus making Jewish religious 'life-style' the earthly embodiment of the divine plan."\textsuperscript{130} Hurtado presented the example of personified Penitence from the first-century *Joseph and Asenath*. Penitence here is as fully personified as Wisdom is elsewhere, but Hurtado argued it is "unlikely that Penitence is a 'real' intermediary."\textsuperscript{131} Such vivid personifications are rhetorical tools and not theological claims:

The personification of divine attributes was intended to focus attention upon particular aspects of God's nature and (e.g., in Philo) occasionally to magnify God by emphasizing that he is greater than any of his works indicate. The appropriation of the language of divine agency to describe particular personified divine attributes was intended to highlight even more the significance of the attribute so described.\textsuperscript{132}

Hurtado is only one scholar among several who believe that the concepts "hypostasis" and "hypostatization" are not useful to biblical studies. Von Rad, for example, questions the methodology at work.

But one must ask, further, whether it is sensible first of all to establish a precise definition of 'hypostasis' and then apply it to the texts. The reverse


\textsuperscript{130} Hurtado, *One God*, 43.

\textsuperscript{131} Hurtado, *One God*, 46.

\textsuperscript{132} Hurtado, *One God*, 49-50.
process would be a methodologically more correct one, namely to
examine the texts and, if a particular discovery emerges, then to formulate
a definition of it.133

Ancient Near Eastern texts do not demonstrate a native category that matches the modern
scholarly creation "hypostasis." One can make this case about many scholarly categories,
however. Although Von Rad's objections might be sound, they are too general to call this
scholarly tradition into question.134

Some scholars also found the scholarly definition of hypostases to be nebulous
and ad hoc. Hurtado, for example, quoted the definition in Oesterley-Box and asks, "Just
what are we to make of something defined as a 'quasi-personification of certain attributes
proper to God, occupying an intermediate position between personalities and abstract
beings'?"135 Saul Olyan made a similar critique: the word hypostasis, he claims, is a
floating signifier. The lack of an agreed definition, he claimed, makes it impossible to
know the preconceived notions that scholars will inevitably bring to the word.136 The
lack of an agreed meaning also yielded a century's worth of ad-hoc definitions that did
nothing to create a useful interpretive idea. According to Olyan, the result has been only
noise.137

1970), 147 n.

134 This same critique is employed by Larry Hurtado, in his review of *Angelomorphic Christology:

135 Hurtado, *One God*, 37.

136 Saul Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism*
(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1993), 90.

137 Olyan, *Thousands*, 90.
Hurtado also pointed out that the term "hypostasis" has been poisoned through its ties to anti-Jewish polemic. Moore dismissed Bousset's caricature of Judaism, for example, on just such grounds. Hurtado, perhaps thinking of Bousset, claimed that the purported "discovery" by modern scholars of Second Temple period hypostases and other mediating characters reveals their own scholarly prejudice. They posited a Jewish religious imagination that had lost sight of an immanent, personal deity and had gone on to generate a swarm of mediating figures to fill the gap. Thus, Hurtado cautioned against the use of a term that carries such history with it.

With his focus on the Second Temple period, Hurtado did not address the work of McBride who concentrated on the preexilic period. McBride argued that hypostases can be very specifically defined, are not an inherently anti-Semitic category, and are, in fact, a useful way to understand some features of Israelite religion. Hurtado did not likely encounter McCarter's 1987 article before it was published. It is hard to make sense of Yahweh's 'āšērā or of divine names like ḫrmbyt'l, ʾšmbyt'l, ʾnthyt'l as merely a "vivid idiom of ancient Jewish expression." These names were specific religious expressions that describe the ontological dependence of one being on another. The evidence from Elephantine, especially, demonstrated that the modern category of hypostases does in fact help to explain the ancient evidence.

It is clear in his Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence, that Charles A. Gieschen was sensitive to Hurtado's critique. In order to establish his thesis, that early Christians believed Jesus to be a manifestation of God similar to the Hebrew scriptures' "angel of Yahweh," Gieschen thoroughly reviewed the history of

138 Olyan, Thousands, 90.
hypostases in the *religionsgeschichtliche* school.\textsuperscript{139} He included the work of scholars who support the idea as well as those who reject it.\textsuperscript{140} He offered two reasons that the language of hypostases remains a useful tool to understand the religious imagery of the Bible. First, the attempts of scholars to come up with alternative definitions led to language that describes the personification of attributes, but could not account for their seeming independence. Such alternative definitions did not describe the image as fully as the language of hypostases. Second, Gieschen argued that it was better to modify the idea when necessary and continue to work within the tradition than to come up with new language and simply start over, especially after a century of using the concept as an interpretative tool.\textsuperscript{141}

Gieschen recognized, however, that a fresh definition is necessary to account for all the critiques the idea has received. He therefore redefined hypostases as

the aspect of the deity that is depicted with independent personhood of varying degrees. The textual evidence shows that an hypostases shares the nature, authority, and will of the deity since it remains an aspect of the deity.\textsuperscript{142}

Gieschen noted that he used the word "aspect" in the "wide sense that is inclusive of realities like 'the Word of the Lord.'" Thus, Gieschen emphasized the way that hypostases shared qualities with and developed independence from the deities out of


\textsuperscript{140} Gieschen, *Angelomorphic*, 36-45.

\textsuperscript{141} Gieschen, *Angelomorphic*, 36.

\textsuperscript{142} Gieschen, *Angelomorphic*, 45. It is noteworthy that McCarter only defined wrath as a hypostasis when it worked counter to Yahweh's will, whereas Gieschen defines a hypostasis as something the shares the will of the deity (McCarter, "Rage," 87.)
which they spring. Any mention of hypostatic mediation, however, he passes over in silence.

Reviewing Gieschen's work, Hurtado declared,

His discussion of whether a personified attribute of God is to be taken as a 'hypostasis' seems to me a bit simplistic in assuming that vivid depiction of Wisdom or Logos in personalized terms can be taken by itself as indicating that they were seen as real entities with "independent personhood." I suggest that we know what to make of the vivid depictions by looking at whether Wisdom or Logos is actually treated as an entity with "independent personhood" in the religious practices, especially cultic practices, of ancient Jews such as Philo."\(^{143}\)

Nonetheless, Hurtado did not account for several pieces of evidence that revealed that cult was indeed given to archangelic hypostases. Andrew Chester noted, for example, that Jews of Philo's time and later occasionally equated hypostases with archangels. For example, sometimes Philo called the Logos an archangel, as in *de Confusione Linguarum* 146, but at other times spoke of the same Logos hypostatized divine Wisdom.\(^{144}\) A prayer to the archangel Michael appeared in the second-century CE Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Baruch* (9:5), "And may Michael, the archangel of Righteousness, who opens the gates for the righteous, be (the object of) my attention until he leads the righteous in."\(^{145}\) The late fourth- to early fifth-century Talumd Yerushalmi, *Berakot* 9:13a specifically prohibited Jews from addressing prayers to archangels, "When a man is in need, he must pray directly to God, and neither to Michael nor to Gabriel." The prohibition was not always effective. A rabbinic prayer to Michael is known from the early 7th century CE


Rabbi Eliezer ha-Qalir, and Aramaic incantation bowls from the same period invoked Michael, Gabriel, and other archangels in their imprecations.\textsuperscript{146} The evidence is admittedly thin, but it is sufficient to show that during Philo's time and after, Jews offered prayers to beings other than God, and that Philo, at least, equated these beings with hypostases.

Hurtado's call here for an analysis of ancient cultic practices was answered in many ways in Benjamin Sommer's 2009 \textit{Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel}. Working solely from ancient Near Eastern evidence, Sommer investigated beliefs about divine corporeality and selfhood in Mesopotamia, Syria, and Israel. He determined that the deities worshipped by these cultures had bodies that were in many ways "fluid."\textsuperscript{147}

This fluidity appeared in two ways. First, deities could "fragment," i.e. they could appear in several places at the same time and even take on distinct phenomenologies while at the same time remaining the same deity. Sommer compared such fragmentation to the Hindu idea of an \textit{avatar}, a partial manifestation of a deity. The entirety of the deity's being is too great for believers to comprehend, so the deity undergoes a "diminution," allowing a part of itself to appear in bounded form, i.e. in time and space, so that believers may approach.\textsuperscript{148} Sommer presented Ishtar as the clearest example of this. Ishtar of Arbela, Ishtar of Nineveh, and the planet Venus were all "avatars" of the


\textsuperscript{147} Benjamin Sommer, \textit{The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 12.

\textsuperscript{148} Sommer, \textit{Bodies}, 15.
same goddess. In cult and in treaties, each of these manifestations were treated as distinct beings. These manifestations acted in parallel ways, however, and believers recognized in that the underlying unity of the deity. Sommer found evidence of such multiple yet parallel manifestations in the cult of the deity Adad. The inscriptions at Kuntillet ’Ajrud showed Yahweh in a similar light. The texts there speak of Yahweh of Samaria and Yahweh of Te(i)man. In the Hebrew scriptures, one finds Yahweh in Hebron (2 Samuel 15:7) and Yahweh in Zion (Psalm 99:2). Abraham's visitor (Genesis 18:1-33), Sommer claimed, was also such a "partial manifestation."

Second, according to Sommer, deities were fluid in that they could "overlap," i.e. one deity could merge with another without either of them sacrificing their independent selfhood. In the *Enuma Elish*, for example, Anu, Ea, and Enlil were each identified at various points with Marduk. Elsewhere in the epic, they acted independently. Sommer identified this characteristic in Yahweh as well, who overlaps with beings known in the Hebrew scripture as *malʾākîm*:

The *malʾāk* is in these cases is not a being separate from Yhwh whom Yhwh sent on a mission; rather it is a part of the deity that can act on its own. Alternatively, it is possible that Yahweh temporarily overlaps with some heavenly beings who do God's bidding (which suggests a model different from that of an avatar).

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150 Sommer, *Bodies*, 15, 37.

151 Sommer, *Bodies*, 40.


Sommer offered the story of Jacob's wrestling as one example of Yahweh's ability to "overlap."\textsuperscript{154} The being with whom Jacob wrestles was called an 'iš, a man (unlike Abraham's visitor who is identified as Yahweh right from the beginning of the narrative), but Jacob came to recognize him as an 'ĕlōhîm, a word used to describe Yahweh as well as lower-ranking divine beings like mal'ākîm. The text seemed to imply that both meanings are intended here, that Jacob's visitor was both Yahweh and a mal'āk at the same time. Hosea's commentary on this passage, using synonymous parallelism, equivocates similarly:

\begin{quote}
In his might he wrestled 'ĕlōhîm.
He wrestled a mal'āk and prevailed.
He wept, he sought his favor,
At Beth-El he found him.
It was Yahweh, the God of hosts, Yahweh was his name. (Hosea 12:4-6)
\end{quote}

Hosea, like the author of Genesis 32, understood the being with whom Jacob wrestled to be simultaneously a mal'āk, 'ĕlōhîm, and Yahweh. Sommer contended that such a belief is possible if Yahweh was understood to have "overlapped" with a minor divine being.

Sommer hoped that his synthesis of the fluidity tradition will help overcome the limiting polarities in which scholars have worked, specifically the polarities of "immanence vs. transcendence" and "monotheism vs. polytheism."\textsuperscript{155} To these polarities one could add "modern categories vs. ancient evidence." The essence of the challenge Von Rad and Hurtado bring to the discussion of hypostases is that the idea is a modern category into which ancient evidence is made to fit. Sommer demonstrated that one can take modern ideas never mentioned in the ancient world, like "fluidity," "fragment," and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[154] Sommer, \textit{Bodies}, 41.
\item[155] Sommer, \textit{Bodies}, 12-13.
\end{footnotes}
"overlap," and use them to understand ancient evidence that heretofore remained obscure. Sommer's study of the phrase "Yahweh-in-Hebron" (2 Samuel 15:8) demonstrates the usefulness of this technique. David understood Absalom's need to return to Hebron to pay his vow to a deity whose shrine is also in Jerusalem, and this understanding was likely clear to ancient readers as well even though it was never explained. Modern categories of thought, like Sommer's "fluidity" hypothesis help modern readers grasp the ancient understanding. Without specifically stating so, Sommer has answered Von Rad's appeal "to examine the texts and, if a particular discovery emerges, then to formulate a definition of it." Von Rad did not note that such a newly formulated definition would also constitute a modern category.

Given the topic at hand, it is important to underscore that Sommer himself made a connection between his idea of "fragmentation and overlap" and the religionsgeschichtliche tradition of hypostases:

[Hypostases] may have been related to the god from whom they emanated just as the various Ishtars were related to each other or Marduk and Anu were related. They are merely different masks given to the manifestations of various cosmic forces (e.g., forces of fertility, or potent authority, or healing) that were intricately and intimately related to each other. Just as these forces were separated only at the level of phenomenon or perception, so too the hypostases and epithets were separate but at root part of the god. What religionsgeschichtliche scholars identified as hypostases were thus, Sommer claimed, examples of his ideas of fragmentation and overlap. The idea of fragmentation clarified how individual manifestations of a deity could mediate an unbounded deity in time and space. Ancient religious thinkers could conceive of an encounter with a divine

156 Von Rad, Weisheit, 147 n. 1.

157 Sommer, Bodies, 198-199 n.182.
manifestation that was, at one and the same time, an encounter with the real deity but also something distinct from other manifestations of the deity. Such a manifestation shares in the qualities of the deity without sharing the deity's "scale." When previous scholars spoke of a hypostasis mediating the deity without exhausting it they were getting at the same idea. The idea of fragmentation also encompasses McCarter's idea of a hypostasis as the "cultically available presence of the deity." Yahweh in Jerusalem was Yahweh, but in the same way that Yahweh in Hebron was Yahweh. A devotee of Yahweh normally had access only to these distinct cultic "fragments," but Yahweh also transcended all his manifestations.

V. Conclusions

To summarize, hypostases appear in narratives as substantivized divine qualities, and in the cult as mediations of the divine presence. Bousset, Oesterley and Box, Mowinckel, Pfeifer, and Gieschen all agree that hypostases participate somehow in the deities they represent, but are at the same time separate from them. As Bousset, Oesterley and Box, and Pfeifer emphasize, the fact that hypostases both "are" and "are not" the deity from whose nature they spring allows them to act as mediators of that same deity.

The ability of a hypostasis to mediate its originating deity's presence is related to its independence from the deity. As Ringgren demonstrated, a hypostasis that becomes deified, like Hu or Sia, can be so independent from its originating deity that its original hypostatic nature is forgotten. If, alternatively, it becomes a lesser being in the divine realm, as McCarter demonstrated with Yahweh's anger, it can work against the original deity even as it remains subordinate to the deity. This does not mean that all fully
independent hypostases made bad mediators; the angel Raphael in the book of Tobit mediated God's healing both to Sarah and to Tobit. Nonetheless, the independent nature of some hypostases obscured their connection with the deities from which they sprang.

The type of hypostasis Bousset described, called "semi-independent" hypostases are more commonly divine mediators. They have an "is-and-is-not" relationship with the deity.¹⁵⁸ Scholars of Yahweh's hypostatic Name or Wisdom claim just such an "is-and-is-not" relationship between Yahweh and the hypostasis. Others might question their conclusions, but their rationale remains clear: deity's attribute can take on an existence of its own in the cult or in narrative. In doing so, it mediates the presence of a deity in a certain time and place without compromising the singularity or cosmic scale of the deity.

Regarding these "semi-independent" hypostases, one can rightly ask what differentiates them from vivid or poetic language. One way to see that something has taken on a life of its own is to notice when ancient authors speak of it as a subject, acting on its own in a narrative. Certainly poetic personifications can do this too, as Ringgren demonstrated. In the case of a hypostasis like Yahweh's šēm, however, a number of different texts written in different places at different times show a divine attribute with its own substantial identity (2 Samuel 6:2; 1 Kings 3:2; Psalm 7:18, Isaiah 30:27). One gets the impression that the authors of these texts considered Yahweh's šēm to have its own continuing existence through time.

A reference to joint yet subordinated action indicates that a hypostasis had taken on a life of its own. At Kuntillet 'Ajrud, one of the blessing inscriptions containing the

¹⁵⁸ See discussion on pg. 20. To repeat Bousset's insight, they are separate from the deity, yet at the same time "mit seinem Wesen verschmolzen."
word 'āšērā demonstrates just a joint yet subordinate relationship. Inscription 3.6:5-10 reads:

I have blessed you by
Yahweh of Têmân
and by his asherah. May He
bless you and may He keep you, and may He be with my
Lord... 159

The action is joint in as much as the supplicant invokes both Yahweh and his 'āšērā in the blessing. The action of the 'āšērā is subordinate, however, in that the verb brk is singular. Only Yahweh does the blessing. It comes to the recipient directly from Yahweh, but also through the 'āšērā, which acts as a kind of conduit or channel. The singular verbs indicates that the 'āšērā is not offering a supplementary or alternative blessing, but rather is handing on the same blessing conferred by Yahweh.

Similar blessings invoking Yahweh's 'āšērā appear elsewhere at Kuntillet 'Ajrud (inscriptions 3.1, 3.9) and at Khirbet el-Qôm. Geographically separated references to Yahweh's 'āšērā in blessing formulae lead one to believe that such references are not the product of one-time scribal or religious creativity, but were references to a widespread religious idea. The idea specifically was that Yahweh's 'āšērā, whatever it might be, was not simply a poetic way to speak of Yahweh's presence, but was something distinct enough that he could possess it. At the same time, although the 'āšērā was something

other than Yahweh, the blessing conferred through it was Yahweh's own blessing. The
'āšērā "was" Yahweh insofar as it transmitted his blessing, and yet "was not" Yahweh in
as much as it was distinct from him.

The independence of ancient Near Eastern hypostases makes sense in the light of
Porter's definition of an Assyrian *ilu*:

... not a 'god' in our sense, but a set of related but not completely congruent
phenomena and qualities, only one of which was imagined as a divine
person..."160

Sommer argues that the God of Israel had essentially the same characteristics. When one
imagines a deity in this way, it comes as no surprise that a part of a deity can take on a
life of its own. The deity does not have a concrete, discrete, unique "self", but is rather a
fluid set of phenomena that can fragment and overlap, and yet still remain a part of the
deity. Whatever Yahweh's 'āšērā might have been, Yahweh could "overlap" with it and
make it a channel for his blessing.

The ability of a deity to do this is well articulated by Ron Hendel in his own
review of Sommer's work.

I suggest that this concept of fluid embodiment can be made more precise
by distinguishing between the gods' cultic and cosmic bodies... Cultic
fluidity pertains to the coexistence of local cults or cult sites and entails a
fluidity of earthly manifestation. Like the Virgin Mary (e.g., Our Lady of
Lourdes, Guadalupe, Fatima), ancient gods had multiple local cults, which
gives them a spatial fluidity. The same local multiplicity pertains to cult
statues and symbols of the gods... Mircea Eliade’s concept of sacred space
helps to explain why one god can be present in many locales, which all
share the quality of a “cosmic center” that transcends the normal
limitations of space and time. The multiple localization of the divine body
is a quality of the fluidity of sacred space as much as a quality of the body

160 Barbara N. Porter, "The Anxiety of Multiplicity: Concepts of Divinity as One and Many in Ancient
Assyria," *One God or Many? Conceptions of Divinity in the Ancient World* (ed. B. Porter; Casco Bay, ME:
Casco Bay Assyriological Institute, 2000), 247.
The study within this chapter invites one to add a category to Hendel's distinction. It is a distinction between "cosmic" and "cultic/narrative." A deity's appearance in narrative poses a question similar to the one raised by the deity's presence in cultic realia. To paraphrase McCarter, how can a being who has his existence in the heavenly realm be an actor in human drama or in a geographically specific cult place? The presence of a hypostasis that simultaneously is and is not the cosmic deity is one way to answer this question.

As the next chapters will show, the abstract quality of Yahweh most often associated with fire is his "active presence." When Yahweh appears as a character in narrative, fiery phenomena appear with him. When Yahweh acts at a distance, fiery phenomena mediate his activity. In the cult, the burning of offerings symbolizes Yahweh's reception of them. Such a relationship between fire and Yahweh's activity invites one to investigate whether any of the instances of preternatural fire in the Hebrew Bible are in fact hypostases of the active divine presence.

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CHAPTER 3

FIRE AS A QUALITY OF YAHWEH

I. Introduction

To reiterate the conclusions of the last chapter, a hypostasis is an attribute, quality, function, or limb of a deity that has taken on a life of its own. Ancient authors speak of hypostases acting independently or semi-independently. An independent hypostasis can act counter to its originating deity's will. A semi-independent hypostasis acts as a mediator, communicating some feature of the deity while remaining distinct. What distinguishes each of these hypostases is the reality that religious thinkers and writers impute to them. At their inception, hypostases may have been a symbolic way to describe an entire deity by one of its attributes. Over time and through repeated use, the attribute takes on a life of its own. This research project seeks evidence for the claim that preternatural fire represented a hypostatized divine attribute.

The most likely abstract quality of Yahweh to be hypostatized by fire is his active presence. In the chapters to follow, this study will show that fire symbolizes Yahweh's active presence in every historical period of Israelite literature. Furthermore, some authors pushed the metaphor further, treating fire as something that goes out from Yahweh and acts on its own. Parallel to this development, some writers who spoke of the cult also made the same distinction. Cultic fire can at times manifest Yahweh's active presence, while at other times it acts at a distance from Yahweh, mediating but not embodying his presence at the cult site. In each case, fiery phenomena are strongly associated with Yahweh's activity in narrative and in cult.
This chapter is an analysis of the narratives in which Yahweh's active presence appears in the company of fire or is embodied by it. Although other ancient Near Eastern deities appear in art and literature with readily recognizable iconography, Yahweh does not. What one finds instead are storm motifs, including 'ēš (fire), hōšek (darkness), 'āšān (smoke), 'ārāpel (thick darkness), 'ānān (cloud), qōl (thunder), and bārāq (lightning). These phenomena accompany Yahweh in several strands of Israelite religious tradition. According to J. Jeremias, these storm motifs indicate Yahweh's power over all nature.162 In these storm theophanies, Yahweh generated a "brightness" (nōgah) around him, out of which came burning precipitation (bārād and gahālē-'ēš, for example, in 2 Samuel 22:13 // Psalm 18:13).163 Lipiński, Mann, and Cross investigated these images in their wider ancient Near Eastern context, and noted the importance of storm images like cloud (ʿāb, 'ārābā, 'ānān), smoke ('āšān), destructive precipitation (bārād, gahal, 'elgābīs), wind (rūah, sə'ārā), and fire ('ēš, lahab) in divine theophanies.164 In Israelite narratives, many of the fiery images that reveal the divine presence have storm imagery either explicitly or implicitly in the background.

In some narratives, storm motifs supplement an anthropomorphic description of Yahweh (2 Samuel 22:7-16 // Psalm 18:7-16). In others, a description of a storm is the entirety of the theophany (Jeremiah 10:10-13). In still others, the phenomena even

162 Jörg Jeremias, Theophanie: die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Gattung (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag), 34-36. Jeremias includes volcanic motifs with these especially due to the motif of gahālē-'ēš, but later writers reject this, noting how God usually "comes down" in the theophanies. See the section below on Exodus 19:18 for a full discussion (pgs. 88-92).

163 Jeremias, Theophanie, 62-63.

appear without an accompanying storm (Genesis 15:12, 17). In this last example, 'ēš, hōšek, and 'āšān, although common in descriptions of storms, are purely indicators of Yahweh's presence and have no connection to a natural event. These motifs appear consistently, even as other aspects of Yahweh's manifestation change. One can claim that they are the closest thing the writers of the Hebrew scriptures had to an iconography of Yahweh.

Among these motifs, fire occupies an important place. When fire appears, Yahweh is acting to change the outcome of a narrative. Fire can manifest wrath, as it does in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18 and in Exodus 13:21. In other texts, as in Ezekiel 1 or Exodus 24:17, it is the agency that allows the kəbōd-yhwh to become perceptible. As a pillar of fire on the desert journey, it appears especially when Israel is on the move (Exodus 13:21-22; 14:24; Numbers 14:14; Nehemiah 9:12, 19). Fire also appears when Yahweh speaks, for example, when giving of a prophetic word to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:27) or offering a covenant through Moses to Israel (Exodus 19:18; 24:17; Deuteronomy 4:11-12). Images of "devouring fire," a common idiom in several Semitic languages, manifest Yahweh's jealousy for and protection of Israel (Deuteronomy 9:3). Finally, fire takes on a new importance in the book of Deuteronomy, becoming the primary indicator of Yahweh's presence at Sinai. Israelite authors found fire, with its ability to confer benefits and inflict damage, an apt symbol for Yahweh's active presence.\(^\text{165}\)

\(^{165}\) Not every mention of divine presence is active. Consider the narrative in Exodus 18:12, which reads: wayyiqaḥ yitrō hōbēn mōṣēh 'olā 'ūzabāḥim lē lōhîm wayyābo 'ahāron wəkol ziqnē yishrā ēl le 'ekol-lehem 'im-hōbēn mōṣē lipnē hā ēlōhîm. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God, and Aaron and all the elders of Israel came to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law in the presence of God. The divine presence is specifically noted, but it does not interact with the characters or affect the outcome of the narrative.
II. Anthropomorphic Divine Imagery and Fire

A. 2 Samuel 22//Psalm 18

Fire that accompanies an active, anthropomorphic Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible appears in the archaic "Psalm of David" found in 2 Samuel 22 and Psalm 18.\textsuperscript{166} In 2 Samuel 22: 5-20 the psalmist recounts the prayer of a threatened king who calls on Yahweh. In 2 Samuel 22:9, the psalmist describes the effect of Yahweh's rage on the divine body:

\begin{align*}
\text{‘ālā ‘āšān } & \text{ bo ‘appó} \\
\text{wa ‘ēš } & \text{ mippîw } \text{ tō ‘kēl} \\
\text{gehālîm } & \text{ bā ’ārû mimmennû}\textsuperscript{167}
\end{align*}

Smoke went up from his nostrils and fire from his mouth devoured, coals flared off of him.

In 2 Samuel 22:10, the psalmist recounts Yahweh's arrival to rescue his servant:

\begin{align*}
\text{wayyēt } & \text{ šāmayim wayyērad} \\
\text{wa ’ārāpel } & \text{ tahat raglāyw}
\end{align*}

He stretched out the heavens and he came down, thick darkness was under his feet.


\textsuperscript{167} Psalm 18:9 is identical, and the text shows no problems (cf. McCarter, \textit{II Samuel}, 456). The retroverted LXX and Syriac have mippānāyw where the MT has mippîw, likely due to homoiarchon and the former word's wide usage. Psalm 17:9 of LXX, when retroverted into Hebrew, reads tōkēl’ ēres but this reading is unique to the LXX and is likely not original. Hans-Joachim Kraus believes gehālîm bā’ ārû mimmennû is a secondary addition, due to its "conspicuous disruption of the double triad." (See H.-J. Kraus, \textit{Psalmen I} [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1958], 138, n. h and i).
In 2 Samuel:13-15, Yahweh turns the fire against the enemies of the king:

\[
\text{minnōgah negdō} \\
\text{bā́ ţārû gaḥālē-} \ 'ēz 168 \\
\text{wayyar'ēm min-šāmāyim yhwh} \\
\text{wə'elyōn yittēn qōlō} 169 \\
\text{wayyišlah hiśṣim wayapišēm} \\
\text{bārāq wayyāhōmm} 170
\]

Out of the brightness in front of him
flamed forth coals of fire
Yahweh thundered from heaven,
the most high gave forth his voice
He loosed arrows, he scattered them
- lightning, he panicked (them).

This brings about the king's hoped for deliverance in 2 Samuel 22:18:

\[
yassîlēni mē'oyēvī 'āz \\
\text{mis'sōn'ay ki } \text{'āmōšū mimmennî} 171
\]

He delivered me from my strong enemy
from those hating me, because they were mightier than I.

The poem uses verbs of motion (nāṭah, yārad, šālah) and verbs indicating the exercise of power (rā'am, hēpîṣ [pwṣ], hāmam, hiṣṣîl [nst]) to describe Yahweh's active presence.

168 McCarter believes 2 Samuel 22:13 was disrupted in transmission. He reconstructs the passage to read: \text{minnōgah negdō bā́ ţārû bārád wogahālē-} 'ēz (McCarter, II Samuel, 457).
The MT of Psalm 18:13 reads:
\[
\text{minnōgah negdō } \text{'ābāyw } \text{ābārū, bārád wogahālē-} 'ēz
\]
This presents a complicated textual crux. The retroverted LXX of 2 Samuel 22:13 follows the MT exactly. The retroverted LXX of Psalm 17:13 (MT 18:13) also follows the MT closely, only losing the masculine possessive pronoun at the end of \text{'ābāyw}:
\[
\text{minnogah negdō } \text{'ābim } \text{ābārū, bārád wogahālē-} 'ēz
\]
McCarter argues that in 2 Samuel 22:13, the phrase \text{bārád wog} was lost due to homoiarchon. Meanwhile, in Psalm 18, bā́ ţārû became \text{ābārū} through metathesis. The phrase \text{'ābāyw}, he claims, is a corrupt duplicate of \text{ābārū}.

169 Psalm 18:14 reads: wayyar'ēm baššāmāyim yhwh / wə'elyōn yittēn qōlō / bārád wogahālē- 'ēz, the last line being a duplication of the final line of Psalm 18:13.

170 4QSam\textsuperscript{a} reads wayāhom. Psalm 18:15 reads wayyišlah hiṣṣāyw wayapišēm / ūbārāqīm rāb wayyhummēm.

171 Psalm 18:18 has: yassîlēni mē'oyēvī 'āz / ûmīs'sōn'ay ki \text{'āmōšū mimmennî}
The text symbolizes this active presence with anthropomorphic and storm motifs. The narrative of 2 Samuel 22:7 refers to 'oznāyw (his ears), 22:9 describes his nostrils ('appō) and mouth (pīw), 22:10 mentions his feet (raglāyw), and 22:14 speaks of his voice (qōlō). This last word also means "thunder" and is just one of several storm motifs that also appear. In 2 Samuel 22:13, he emits coals of fire (gaḥālē-ʾēš) and in Psalm 18:13 he also emits hail (bārād). In 2 Samuel 22:9-10 he is surrounded by smoke (ʾāšān) and cloud (waʾārāpel); he thunders (yarʾēm) and hurls lightning (bārāq).172 The poet combines warrior and storm motifs to describe the action of a divine being strong enough to deliver a king.

Although this psalm is overall a royal hymn of thanksgiving, Cross and Weinfeld argue that the first twenty stanzas come from an ancient storm theophany, which Cross compares to Baʿal literature from Ugarit.173 Keel too compares this passage to storm theophanies found elsewhere in the ancient Near East.174 Such theophanies, when they appear in the psalms, invoke Yahweh's mythic power over chaos. Keel argues that such texts "have the function of mobilizing Yahweh's mighty power against human-historical enemies."175 Keel specifically compares 2 Samuel 22:9-10, 13-15 to this ninth-century BCE panel from the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta II.176


173 For a discussion of genre, see Mitchell Dahood, Psalms 1-50, Anchor Bible Commentary (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 104; McCarter, II Samuel, 474; Cross & Freedman, Poetry, 85; Kraus, Psalmen I, 139. For the comparison to Baʿal literature, see Cross, Canaanite Myth, 158.


Within a disc decorated with tongues of flames is the figure of a god with spread wings and a drawn bow. The lower part of his body spreads out into the tail of a bird. The entire emblem, which has been associated with Ashur (E. D. van Buren, *Symbols of the Gods*, Rome, 1945, pp. 95-96), is placed in stylized rain clouds and over a chariot scene, of which only the head of the charioteer and the upper part of a horse's head remain.177

Many scholars believe the deity depicted here is Aššur, although some argue instead for Šamaš.178 In *ANEP* one finds not the original photo, but rather Andrae's line drawing, which brings out the details:

Figure 2: Andrae's sketch of figure 1.

177 Pritchard, *ANE*, 314.

178 Of the scholars listed above, Mayer-Opificius ("Die geflügelte Sonne," 200, 233 Abb. 25) and Klingbeil (*Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*, 250-61) argue that this image is Šamaš. Ornan ("Complex System," 212-217, fig. 2) notes that a winged disk symbolized a number of different deities. The martial imagery here leads her to prefer Aššur as the subject.
Aššur's wings suggest wind and speed; the hanging clustered items in front and behind him are dark storm clouds; "flaming brightness" surrounds him; with his bow, he fires arrows of lightning. The motifs in this image of Aššur reflect closely those in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18. Both images communicate the idea that the storm god acts to overcome historical chaos, whether that is a military threat to Assyria or a conspiratorial threat to the Israelite king.

The fiery images in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18, therefore, are part of a well-attested connection between active divine presence and fire. Specifically, when Yahweh engages in conflict with foreign or domestic enemies he takes on the aspect of a thunderstorm, an aspect which includes the appearance of fire and fiery objects. When Yahweh acts against his foes, he does so amid descriptions of fire.

_B. Ezekiel and the kabôd-yhwh_

Like 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18, the book of Ezekiel contains an image of an active deity that demonstrates both anthropomorphic and fiery characteristics. In fact, the description of Yahweh in the first chapter of Ezekiel might be the most vivid description of Yahweh in all of the Hebrew Bible. Fiery brilliance is the deity's primary attribute: Yahweh is surrounded by fire (Ezekiel 1:8, 27; 8:2) and accompanied by a fiery substance (Ezekiel 1:13-14) that can symbolize Yahweh's wrath (10:2, 6-7). The first of these types of fire, the fire that surrounds Yahweh, will be discussed in this section. The others will appear in the next chapter.

---

Ezekiel 1 symbolizes Yahweh's active presence with descriptions of motion as did 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18. In Ezekiel 1:4, he also arrives in fiery splendor from a distance:

\[ wāʾēre ʾawāhnēh rūḥah sōʾāvā bāʾā min-hāṣṣāpōn ʾānān gādōl woʾēš mitlaqqahat wənōgah lō sābīb ūmittōkāh kəʾēyn ḥaḥāšmal mittōk ḥāʾēš. \]

And I saw a storm wind coming from the north: a great cloud, and fire flashing, and brightness around it, and from its center, from the midst of the fire, something with the appearance of ḥašmal.\(^{180}\)

Ezekiel goes on to describe winged cherubs who ferry Yahweh from place to place, although the description is more elaborate than the one in 2 Samuel 22 // MT Psalm 18.

Ezekiel 1:6 reads:

\[ wəʾarbaʾā pānīm ləʾēḥāt wəʾarbaʾ kənāpāyim ləʾēḥāt lāhēm \]

There were four faces on each, and four wings on each of them.

In addition to wings, the cherubs ride on wheels (Ezekiel 1:19):

\[ ŭbəleket ḥahəyyōt yēlkū hāʾōppānim ʾesəlām ŭbəhinnāšēʾ ḥahəyyōt mēʾal hāʾāres yinnāšaʿ ū hāʾōppānim \]

When the creatures went, the wheels went next to them, and when the creatures rose from the earth, the wheels rose.

The storm wind, the winged creatures and their wheels moving and rising all contribute to an image of a deity in motion.

---

\(^{180}\) ḥašmal may refer to a fiery appearance, but the meaning of the word is obscure. The LXX renders it ἥλεκτρον, a word that Liddell and Scott relate to ἥλεκτωρ, which means sunshine, solar refulgence, and elemental fire, and which they also note is used to describe both amber and an alloy of gold and silver. The Vulgate follows the LXX and translates ḥašmal as electrum. Driver argues that the Hebrew word ḥašmal may be the Hebrew cognate of the Akkadian elmešu, a word that CAD notes never appears in economic texts, but is only known from descriptions of royal and divine majesty ("elmešu," CAD 4:107-108). The Akkadian elmešu, after losing the initial /ʾ/, underwent a metathesis similar to the one seen in Ugaritic ġlt = Hebrew šeleg (snow). Akkadian literature associates the brilliance of elmešū with a kind of brilliance found in the heavens, and with a kind of brass alloy often included in the matrix of cultic objects to give them a shine (G. R. Driver, "Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision," Vetus Testamentum 2 [Jan 1951]: 61-62). Driver's elaborate etymology of ḥašmal illustrates how rare and difficult a word it is. D. I. Block believes a mysterious word was purposefully chosen to lend mystery to the image (Daniel. I. Block, The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 1-24 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 93).
When Yahweh comes into view, his appearance is fiery. Ezekiel describes Yahweh's appearance in two passages, Ezekiel 1:26-28 and 8:2. The latter specifically refers back to the former in its description of Yahweh and his concomitant fire (8:4).

Looking specifically at the description of the fire in Ezekiel 1:27, one finds:

\[
wā ‚ēre’ kə‘ên ḥašmal kəmarʾēh-ʾēš bēt-lāh săbib mimmarʾē\181 motnāyw ūlōmā’lā ūmithmarʾē môtnāyw ūlōmaṭṭā rāʾītī kəmarʾēh-ʾēš wənōgah lō săbib.\182
\]

From the appearance of his loins and above, I saw something like the sight of heavenly brilliance, like the appearance of fire inside it all around, and from the appearance of his loins and downward, I saw something like the appearance of fire and brightness all around him.

A similar description appears in Ezekiel 8:2

\[
wā ‚ēre’ wôhinnēh domūt kəmarʾēh-ʾēš mimmarʾē môtnāyw ūlōmaṭṭā ʾēš ūmithmôtnāyw ūlōmā’lā kəmarʾēh-zohar kə‘ên ḥaḥašmalā.\183
\]

I saw a likeness similar to the appearance of fire: from his loins and downward was fire, and from his loins and upward something like the appearance of splendor, like the sight of heavenly brilliance.

The scholarship discussing the textual history of Ezekiel's visions is beyond the scope of this study.\184 In spite of the complexity, all versions show broad agreement on certain fundamental points: all the ancient versions agree that Yahweh has an anthropomorphic body with fiery characteristics.

---

181 The Vulgate follows the MT closely, but lacks this and the following mimmarʾē.

182 The text of 1:27 is complex. The retroverted LXX is shorter than the MT given above:

\[
wā ‚ēre’ kə‘ên ḥašmal mimmarʾē tôtnāyw ūlōmā’lā ūmithmarʾē tôtnāyw ūlōmaṭṭā rāʾītī kəmarʾēh-ʾēš wənōgah lō săbib.
\]

183 The Vulgate follows the MT exactly in 8:2. The retroverted LXX of Ezekiel 8:2 reads

\[
wā ‚ēre’ wôhinnē domūt kəmarʾē-ʾēš tôtnāyw ūlōmaṭṭā ʾēš ūmith tôtnāyw ūlōmā’lā kə‘ên ḥaḥašmalā
\]

In Hatch & Redpath, the LXX ὀμοίωμα renders the Hebrew phrase domūt kəmarʾē.

184 The LXX is significantly shorter than the MT. Block, Ezekiel 1-24, 42 n. 2, provides a short bibliography of the text criticism, as does Zimmerli, Ezekiel 1, 74-77. Zimmerli’s discussion of the text appears in Ezekiel 1, 100-101.
Ezekiel 1:1-28 is an extended introduction to Yahweh, who becomes the subject of Ezekiel 2:1-5:17, in which the enthroned, fiery Yahweh commissions Ezekiel to prophecy. In Ezekiel 8:5-9:11, the same enthroned, fiery Yahweh appears again to reveal the hidden sins of Israel's leaders and the resulting punishment that awaits Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{185}

As in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18, the narrative describes Yahweh's active presence with words indicating motion and with Yahweh's effect on the narrative. Yahweh's movement is best expressed by the sight of Yahweh's chariot. The narrative includes descriptions of its team of cherubim (Ezekiel 1:5-11), its strange motions (Ezekiel 1:12-14), and its wheels (Ezekiel 1:16-21). The effect that Yahweh has on the narrative appears only at the end of Ezekiel 1:28, when the prophet prostrates himself. According to Block, the fire provides a dazzling quality to the deity whose form was like an \textit{ādām}.\textsuperscript{186} It also, confirms the prophet's message, as Zimmerli points out.\textsuperscript{187} The k\textit{əbōd yhwh}, Zimmerli claims, is the "fiery manifestation of light," that ancient Israelites would have recognized from the stories included today in the Pentateuch.

Fire in this passage, to borrow Rudolph Otto's phrase, a Yahwistic \textit{mysterium tremendum et fascinans}. In doing so, Weinfeld points out, Ezekiel can claim an encounter with the same deity who appeared in fire and intervened vigorously in the circumstances of Israel's ancestors.\textsuperscript{188} By using fire and other storm imagery to describe his encounter

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\textsuperscript{185} Yahweh appears to again, without fire imagery, in Ezekiel 10:18 and 11:23, when he rides his throne-chariot out of the temple and takes up a position above the mountain east of the city. In Ezekiel 43:2, he reenters the restored temple.

\textsuperscript{186} Block, \textit{Ezekiel 1-24}, 104.

\textsuperscript{187} Zimmerli \textit{Ezekiel 1}, 123-124.

\textsuperscript{188} Greenberg, \textit{Ezekiel 1-20}, 53-59.
with the \textit{kəbôd yhwh}, Ezekiel communicates a vision that points both to Israel's past and its future.

\textit{Excursus: kəbôd-yhwh}\footnote{Discussions of the \textit{kəbôd-yhwh} and its fiery characteristics are an important part of the scholarship on Ezekiel 1. As such, an excursus here to investigate the meaning of the \textit{kəbôd-yhwh} is helpful in unpacking the meaning of Ezekiel's image. In fact, not every mention of the \textit{kəbôd-yhwh} is anthropomorphic. A review of the scholarly discussion therefore requires references here to passages better investigated under the heading "Non-Anthropomorphic Yahwistic Fire," which begins on pg. 83.}


The basic meanings of the word \textit{kābôd} do not imply fiery phenomena. Koehler-Baumgartner defines the word thus:

1. heaviness, burden; 2a. riches; 2b. reputation, importance; 3. glory, splendour; 4 distinction, honour.\footnote{\textit{HALOT}, 2:457.}

About the phrase \textit{kəbôd-yhwh}, Koehler-Baumgartner says:
a.) power, authority and honour of Yahweh; however it is also often connected with manifestations of light (orig. a weather-god, or the god of a volcano?)... c.) as manifestation of Yahweh... e.) essence or power in a broader sense, reserved only for God.

Thus kābōd, which has basic senses connected to the concept of physical or social "weight," takes on a specialized meaning in Yahwistic contexts, where it refers to a manifestation of Yahweh's essence, especially manifestations of power or light, with echoes storm imagery.192 Such manifestations of power or light reminded many scholars of Mesopotamian descriptions of melammu and puluḫtu / pulḫu, Akkadian terms which also can take on specialized meanings of divine radiance.193 In AHw, for example, melammu means "Schreckenglanz(maske)," a type of fear-inducing gaze or mask found in both royal and divine contexts. AHw defines puluḫtu as "Furcht; Furchtbarkeit." CAD defines melammu as "1.) radiance, supernatural awe-inspiring sheen, (inherent in things divine and royal), 2. glow of good health." The definitions and examples indicate that melammu can be attributed to anything divine, including demons and temples. The definition of puluḫtu in CAD is "1. awesomeness, fearlessness, terrifying quality, 2. fear, panic, terror, 3. reference, respect, awe." What becomes immediately apparent when comparing the definitions of kābōd-yhwh, puluḫtu, and melammu is that they do not overlap completely. The main definitions of kābōd meaning "heaviness," or "honor" do not appear in the Mesopotamian words. Furthermore, although the appearance of the kābōd-yhwh can sometimes be lethal, the essential fear-inspiring property of puluḫtu and melammu is not shared by the kābōd-yhwh, which inspires awe more than fear.

192 Although HALOT mentions volcanic imagery, such hypotheses have not been widely accepted. See discussion on pg. 84.

193 Aster, Unbeatable Light, 23-29.
The definitions in both AHw and CAD drew on Leo Oppenheim's 1943 study of pul(u)ḫ(t)u and melammu. Although he does not make an explicit connection between these terms and the kəbôd-yhwh, Oppenheim's work establishes that a radiant or fiery aura surrounded Mesopotamian deities, and later scholars find this to be reminiscent of the kəbôd-yhwh.\(^{194}\) Kings and gods are sometimes "clothed" with pul(u)ḫ(t)u, while at other times in the same or similar texts, they are clothed instead with fire.\(^{195}\) Fiery clothing also appears to be a description of melammu. Ištar, for example, appears in one place girru labiš, "clad in fire."\(^{196}\) In another, she is išāti litbušat and this is followed by a specific reference to melammu:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ištar } & \text{a-ši-bat Arba'īl} \\
& \text{IZI.MEŠ lit-bu-šat mé-lam-mé na-ša-a-ta}\end{align*}\(^{197}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Ištar ašibat Arba'īl} \\
išāti litbušat melamme našāta
\end{align*}
\]

Ishtar dwells in Arbail clad in flames, she is bearing (her) melammu.

Oppenheim believes the word melammu describes the fiery radiance that surrounds the heads of divine beings.\(^{198}\) He infers that melammu is the mythic counterpart to cultic and royal crowns, both of which take the verb našû. The appearance

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\(^{194}\) A. L. Oppenheim, "Akkadian pul(ū)ḫ(t)u and melammu," JAOS 63/1 (1943): 31. See below for the use to which Cassin, Weinfeld, and Milgrom put Oppenheim's work.

\(^{195}\) Oppenheim, "Akkadian," 31.

\(^{196}\) H. Rawlinson, Cuneiform Inscriptions of Western Asia, 2nd ed. (London: British Museum, 1891) plate 31, r 2.

\(^{197}\) Rassam-Cyl. IX 79-80, in Die Keilschrifttexte Asurbanipals, Königs von Assyrien, translated and edited by Samuel Alden Smith (Leipzig: Verlag von Eduard Pfeiffer, 1897), 70-71. Translation is this author's.

\(^{198}\) Oppenheim, "Akkadian," 31-32.
of a crown and melammu in parallel in Enuma Elish I:68 confirms Oppenheim's belief that melammu is the radiant crown-like counterpart to the cloak-like puluḫtu.

The word pul(u)ḫ(t)u, Oppenheim argues, is a parallel for girru or išāti. Walther Schrank, commenting on the same work, argues that divine puluḫtu is the mythic counterpart to the cultic nahlaptu šāntu ša puluḫtu (red robe of puluḫtu). Schrank calls this "ein lang, wallendes vielfaltiges Kleidungsstück, das in geheimnisvollen und mannigfachen Windungen um den Leib geschlungen wird."199 Oppenheim elaborates on this, claiming that the garment was red, and used in exorcisms as a symbol for the divine, fiery puluḫtu, which demons would recognize and fear.200

Oppenheim demonstrates that an aura of terror-provoking invincibility surrounds powerful beings in Assyrian myth, and that this aura was expressed in several instances with images of fire. Yet Oppenheim never connects these fiery costumes of the divine and royal cult to the biblical kōbōd-yhwh. That connection appears first in the conclusion to Elena Cassin's work, Le Splendeur Divine.201

Cassin believes that the kōbōd-yhwh is the Hebrew term that expresses the same realities expressed by the Akkadian term melammu. Cassin focuses the main part of her scholarship on the Akkadian term. The word melammu, she concludes, refers to vital power symbolized in literature by an "émanation éblouissante de lumière":

Dans la pensée des Mésopotamiens, toute forme intense de vitalité - en penchant ce mot dans un sens très large: beauté, jeunesse, joie, puissance, vigueur, aussi bien celle du guerrier que la vigueur sexuelle, tout ce qui est débordement de vie, comme ce qui est parfaitement pur et intègre - se manifeste par une émanation


This "dazzling emanation of light" can be fiery, especially when employed by kings and gods. Ištar's *melammu*, for example, causes the sea to boil:

\[\text{me-lam}_z(-\text{gu}_10)\ \text{engur-ra ku}_6\ \text{mu-ni-ib}_2\text{-šē}_g(-\text{šē}_g)\]

My *melammu* cooks the fish in the sea.

Aššurnaṣirpal also demonstrates *melammu* when he destroys Bît-Adini in fire. The king's memorial inscription claims that Aššur's *melammu* burnt the city, even as the same text records the Assyrian army's destruction of the city by fire.

\[\text{URU ap-púl aq-qur ina IZI.MEŠ GÍBIL a-kul-šú}
\text{púl-ḫi me-lam-me aš-ur EN-a UGU É-a-di-ni al-ta-kan.}
\]

The city I razed (and) destroyed; in flames of fire I consumed it.

The terror of the *melammu* of Aššur my lord I inflicted upon Bit-Adini.

For Cassin, this is a key insight: she claims that Assyrian military use of fire in battle reflected the mythic effects of divine *melammu*. Aššurnaṣirpal, imposed Aššur's *melammu* on Bît-Adini in fire. The fire itself, then, was Aššur's intense, dazzling *melammu* made visible.

In her conclusions, Cassin hints at a connection between *melammu* and the *kəbōd-yhwh*:

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202 Cassin, *Splendeur*, 121.

203 Cassin, *Splendeur*, 75.


205 Cassin, *Splendeur*, 76. RIM A.0.101.1.iii.54
Enfin, quelques-unes des associations que nous avons étudiées dans ce livre transparaissent également dans la notion biblique de *kabôd*. Tour à tour majesté, éclat, grandeur, beauté, puissance et plénitude dans les actes et dans les œuvres, richesse, *kabôd* est la forme sous laquelle Yahweh apparaît, sa gloire. On serait tenté d'ouvrir ici un nouveau chapitre tant on a l'impression que par *kabôd*, les Hébreux exprimaient certaines des réalités que nous avons découvertes derrière les termes accadiens.206

Without expressly stating it, Cassin implies that Yahweh's *kâbôd* is an historical parallel to Akkadian *melammu*, and like the Akkadian term, it is a symbol of Yahweh's active presence (his *vitalité*) and moreover is expressed in literature as a dazzling emanation of light, heat, and fire.

The next scholar207 to take up a study of the *kôbôd-yhwh* was Frank Moore Cross, who argues that the similarities between Mesopotamian and Israelite sources are a consequence of convergent evolution, and not a shared cultural source. Cross defines the *kôbôd-yhwh* as the "refulgent and radiant aureole which surrounds the deity in his manifestations or theophanies."208 Cross finds the cultural history of the image is not clear. He presents the possibility that the *kôbôd-yhwh* is a parallel to *melammu*, but he argues that it is more likely a native Israelite description of the "dark but fiery storm cloud especially associated with the theophany of the storm god."209 Oppenheim, Cross notes, claims that *melammu* is a crown or mask and *puluḫtu* a fiery garment, whereas the

206 Cassin, *Splendeur*, 133.

207 George Mendenhall gives an extended analysis to *melammu* and *puluḫtu* and their Israelite parallels, but focuses his comments less on *ʾēš* than on *ʿānān*. He began his analysis with a study of the words *melammu* and *puluḫtu*, which he says describe the deification of power visually depicted iconographically in the winged disk tradition. The Mesopotamian concepts appear in the Northwest Semitic traditions of the *ʾnn* and *paḏ* of Ba’lu, and in the *ʿānān* and *ʾēš* in the Pentateuchal traditions. Yahweh's *ʿānān*, Mendenhall argues, is the sign of his sovereignty over Israel, just as kings and deities of Assyria manifest their sovereignty through revelations of their *melammu* and *puluḫtu* and through their use of winged disk iconography (*Tenth Generation*, 56-66).


Hebrew writings associate the term not with regalia but storm imagery. Cross presents Exodus 19:16 as an example:

\[
\text{wayəhī bayyōm haššālīši biḥayōt habbōqer wayəhī qōlōt ūbərāqīm weʾānān kāḇēd ʿal-hāhār wəqōl șōpār ḥāzāq məʾōd.}
\]

On the third day, when it was morning, thunder and lightning and heavy cloud were upon the mountain, and the sound of the trumpet was very loud.

According to Cross, this ʿānān kāḇēd was "at once dark and fiery, on which the god rides or which he drives as a chariot..." It is, he claims, the pillar of cloud and fire that leads Israel through the wilderness, and the fiery and cloudy apparition that descends on Sinai during the giving of the covenant. The kāḇōd could appear within the ʿānān, but the two were never united into one "cloud of glory." The ʿānān was always distinct; it was an exterior veil that protected the kāḇōd from profaning gazes. The kəḇōd-yhwh itself, according to Cross, was the divine storm chariot, shrouded by a cloud, and set ablaze by a fusillade of lightning. The term kəḇōd-yhwh later came to be the substantivized "majesty" of Yahweh veiled by a cloud.

In two essays, Moshe Weinfeld argues strongly for an historical parallel between the Mesopotamian and Israelite motifs. He defines the kəḇōd-yhwh as a blazing fire-cloud marking the divine presence. Weinfeld follows Oppenheim and Cassin in arguing that the Israelite idea is an historical parallel to Mesopotamian descriptions of melammu and puluḥtu. Weinfeld expands his search beyond Mesopotamian sources, and believes he finds cognate images also in Ugaritic and Greek literature. The kəḇōd-yhwh

211 Cross, Canaanite Myth, 164-165. Such a belief is reflected elsewhere in scripture (the ʿānān gādōl wəʾēš mitlaqqahat of Ezekiel 1:4) and is hinted at in cognate literature (Baʾluʾs title ṛāḥibʾuʾ urpati).
is, Weinfeld argues, the Israelite version of a well-established tradition of fiery radiance associated with heroes and gods throughout the ancient Near East.

The key biblical text for Weinfeld is Exodus 14:24 which reads:

\[\text{wayəhî bo'ašmōret habbōqer wayyašqēp yhwh 'el-mahānēh mīṣrayim }\]
\[\text{bo'ammūd }'ē\text{s wo'ānān wayyāhōm }'ē\text{t mahānēh mīṣrayim}\]

During the morning watch, Yahweh looked down on the Egyptian army, from within the pillar of fire and cloud, and panicked the Egyptian army.

In Weinfeld's view, all later images of divine fire...developed in fact out of "the fire and the cloud" which are the basic components in descriptions of the deity, its effulgence and splendour. The fire and the cloud together describe the divine brightness which is set within the cloud, a pheno-menon which is formulated in the priestly literature in the Pentateuch: "the glory (kabod) (sic) of the LORD appeared in the cloud" (Exod. 16:10, compare Num 17:7; Exod 40:34-35).

Weinfeld offers a number of texts to support his claim that the \(kābōd\)-\(yhw\) is the effulgence and splendor symbolized by a cloud-encased fire. That the \(kābōd\) itself is fire, Weinfeld argues, is clear from Deut 5:21 (Eng 5:24):

\[\text{wattō 'mōrū hēn her'ānū yhwh 'ēlōhēynū 'et-kābōdō wo'ēt-gādālō wo'ēt-qōlō šāma'nu mittōk hā'ēs}\]

You said, "Look, Yahweh our God has revealed his \(kābōd\) and his greatness, and we have heard his voice from the midst of the fire."

In Weinfeld's view, the Deuteronomist imagines Yahweh's \(kābōd\) to be the fire out of which the deity spoke. Weinfeld offers three passages that describe the blazing \(kābōd\) appearing in a cloud. The first is Exodus 16:10:

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215 BHQ also has this as Deuteronomy 5:24.
When Aaron spoke to the whole company of the Israelites, they turned toward the wilderness, and there the \textit{kəbōd-yhwh} appeared in a cloud.

The second is Exodus 40:34:

\textit{wayəkas} heʻānān 'et-ʻōhel məʼēd ūkəbōd yhwh mālēʼ 'et-hammiškān

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the \textit{kəbōd-yhwh} filled the tabernacle.

The third is (MT) Numbers 17:7:

\textit{wayəhî bə hiqqāhēl hāʼēdā al-mōšeh wəʼal-ʻahərōn wayyipnû ʻel-ʻōhel məʼēd wəhinnēh kisšāhū heʻānān wayyērāʼ kəbōd yhwh}

And when the congregation assembled against Moses and Aaron, they turned toward the tent of meeting, and there the cloud covered it, and the \textit{kəbōd yhwh} appeared.

Thus Weinfeld establishes his picture of the \textit{kəbōd-yhwh} as a blazing firecloud.

Weinfeld also finds that a number of ancient Near Eastern and Greek parallels contain the same components of the \textit{kəbōd-yhwh} that were known in biblical thought.

Weinfeld finds a mention of cloud and fire in Ugaritic literature.\footnote{Weinfeld, "Divine Intervention," 133.} In KTU 1.2 I 35, Yammu's servants demand that the divine assembly hand over Baʻalu and his cloud.

\textit{tn bʻl. wʻnnh.}
\textit{bn . dgn . ārtm pdh}

Give up Baʻal and his cloud,
The son of Dagan, I will possess his gold.

Weinfeld takes Ugaritic \textit{ʻnn} to be \textit{ʻanamu}, a cognate to the Hebrew \textit{ʻānān}, "cloud," and \textit{pd} he renders \textit{padu}, the Ugaritic cognate of Hebrew \textit{paz} (gold). The relationship of \textit{padu} in this passage, he argues, is a parallel to the description of the \textit{kəbōd-yhwh} in Numbers
17:7 or the 'ēš in Deuteronomy 5:24.\textsuperscript{217} As evidence, he notes the strong similarity between the Ugaritic image and the golden cloud that Athena confers on Achilles in the Iliad:\textsuperscript{218}

(205) ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ κεφαλῆι νέφος ἔστεφε διὰ θεῶν χρύσεον ἐκ δ' αὐτοῦ δαίε φλόγα παμφανόωσαν ...

(214) ὃς ἀπ' Ἀχιλλῆς κεφαλῆς σέλας αἰθέρ ἵκανε\textsuperscript{219}

A golden cloud from the goddess wreathed about his head from which blazed forth a flame of radiant light... thus from Achilles' head the flame reached the upper skies.

(Homer, \textit{Il.} 18:205, 214).

Picking up on Oppenheim's claim that Akkadian \textit{melammu} indicated a crown or halo of divinity, Weinfeld believes he can sketch a widespread mythic motif that describes the presence of fire-cloud that indicates divinity or divine favor. He connects this with the narrative in \textit{Enuma Elish} 1:67-69 in which Ea removes Apsû's plundered \textit{melammu} and vests himself with it before administering the \textit{coup-de-grace}.

\begin{verbatim}
ip-tur rik-si-šu iš-ta-ḫaṭ a-ga-šu
me-lam-mi-šu it-ba-la šu-ú ú-ta-di-iq
iš-me-šu ma ZU.AB i-na-ra-āš-šu\textsuperscript{220}
\end{verbatim}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{217} A more common translation for Ugaritic 'nn is "servants" which one finds in John C. Gibson's translation (\textit{Canaanite Myths and Legends} [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978], 42), as well as Dennis Pardee's ("The Ba’lu Epic," \textit{COS} 1.86:246)). Mark Smith treats it as a verb, [']a’anna-hu, "I will humble him" (Mark Smith, \textit{The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume I} [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994], 267). The word is in parallel with 'bd in KTU 1.4 IV 59. DULAT gives no other example of 'nn as "clouds," and HALOT emphasizes the uncertain derivation of the entire 'nn family of roots. It was Mendenhall who first suggested that 'nn meant something other than "servant," and suggested that the parallel of 'nn with .ipi. in IV AB ii 32-33 (KTU 1.10, II:32-33) gave it the meaning "cloud" on the comparative evidence of Ugaritic .ipi and Akkadian apû (Mendenhall, \textit{The Tenth Generation}, 56). The Akkadian word Mendenhall suggests here does not, in fact, appear in AHw or CAD. The closest cognate in AHw is Akkadian apû III, which can mean cloudiness of the eyes. The broken context and KTU's reading . d iph[xx] lead one to wish for a firmer foundation for both Mendenhall's and Weinfeld's conclusions.

\item \textsuperscript{218} Weinfeld, "Divine Intervention," 133.

\end{itemize}
He (Ea) unfastened his (Apsû's) garment, he tore off his crown
His melammu he carried off, with it he arrayed himself.
He bound Apsû, and he put him to death.

In short, Weinfeld claims that the *kābōd yhwh* is a theological elaboration of the older 'ānān and 'ēš, which is nothing more than the Hebrew cognate of the Greek νέφος χρόσεον, the Ugaritic 'nn and pd, and the Assyrian melammu and puluḫtu. These are all divine images of clouds and radiance, the latter expressed with images either of fire or of gold.

Weinfeld's thesis contains a methodological flaw. He makes no clear distinction between historical and typological parallels. Tantalizing hints of patterns appear among Weinfeld's evidence, but none of the texts surveyed show a systematic borrowing of complex motifs. Instead, one finds that clouds, fire, and golden radiance appear around deities and heroes of several cultures. The lynchpin of his argument was the parallel of Ugaritic 'nn to Hebrew 'ānān, but, as noted above, this rests, unfortunately, on shaky comparative Semitic evidence (see above pgs. 80-81 n. 217). Without that support, the claim of an historical parallel between the Greek νέφος χρόσεον and the Hebrew 'ānān and 'ēš no longer finds much support.

In his 1991 *Leviticus*, Milgrom presents an understanding of *kābōd* that draws heavily on the work of Oppenheim and Weinfeld: "The earthly manifestation of God is termed *kābōd*, and it takes the form of fire. It may be compared to Akkadian *puluḫtu*, the

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220 The Standard Babylonian Creation Myth: Enûma Eliš (ed. Philippe Talon; SAACT IV; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, University of Helsinki, 2005), 4 (text) and 35 (transliteration). Translation is by the author of the present study.
Milgrom does not cite either earlier scholar, and their works do not appear in his bibliography, demonstrating that Weinfeld's arguments had become a kind of "conventional wisdom" by the time of Milgrom's writing. Oppenheim, recall, never makes a clear connection between *puluḥtu* and *kābōd* (Cassin was in fact the first), yet Milgrom confidently claims that Yahwistic fire and *kābōd* both refer to the same motif called *puluḥtu* and *melammu* in Akkadian. In spite of Milgrom's reliance on Weinfeld's argument for an historical parallel between *melammu* and the *kəbōd-yhwh*, Milgrom does not add to Weinfeld's evidence for the systematic borrowing of complex motifs. Thus Milgrom's discussion of the fiery *kābōd* and its relationship to Akkadian images contains the same flaws.

Shawn Zelig Aster addresses the question of the historicity and cultural borrowing in his very thorough treatment of *puluḥtu* and *melammu* and their biblical parallels. After a close reading of biblical texts, he argues that mentions of the *kəbōd-yhwh* indicate the perceptible presence of Yahweh, but that it is not necessarily fiery. As for its relationship with Mesopotamian images, Aster argues convincingly that, in spite of similarities, *kābōd* and *melammu* are not historical parallels. He makes an exception in the case of the *kəbōd-yhwh* in Ezekiel, which does show signs of complex borrowing.

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221 Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible Commentary; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 576. Commenting on Leviticus, Milgrom is working with P material that contains little royal imagery. Thus he cannot draw on some of Oppenheim's strongest arguments, which concern the royal aspects of *puluḥtu* and *melammu*.

222 Milgrom does not cite Oppenheim 1943 here, but his bibliography includes that work as well as Cross 1973. Milgrom's bibliography does not include either of Weinfeld's writings on *kābōd*.

The *kabôd-yhwh* Aster argues, is the perceptible presence of Yahweh and not necessarily fiery.\(^{224}\) The *kabôd-yhwh*, is made perceptible by certain phenomena like cloud and fire that indicate the divine presence to human senses.\(^{225}\) Although fire can, in fact, serve as one of these indicators, (e.g. Exodus 24:17), a more common indicator is a cloud, and some passages mention no perceptible phenomenon at all.\(^{226}\) The boundary of the visual phenomenon also represents the boundary of the *kabôd-yhwh*, but the two are not identical.\(^{227}\) It is better to say that human senses can apprehend the *kabôd-yhwh* when a perceptible phenomenon like cloud or fire indicates its presence. Aster's close reading of these texts reveals the lack of subtlety in earlier definitions of the *kabôd-yhwh* as a type of "fire-cloud." Such a description is too broad to account for every instance of the *kabôd-yhwh*.

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\(^{224}\) Aster, *Unbeatable Light*, 277.

\(^{225}\) This is in contrast to Exodus 14:24, which does not mention the *kâbôd*, and in which Yahweh casts a glance from the cloud. Such an action suggests that some form was visible in the cloud.

\(^{226}\) Aster, *Unbeatable Light*, 274-275. Cloud alone represents *kâbôd* in Exodus 16:10, Exodus 40:34, Numbers 17:7 (MT) [Eng. 16:42], 1 Kings 8:11, Isaiah 4:5, Ezekiel 10:4. Aster's analysis of 1 Kings 8:10-11 raises an interesting consideration for Zechariah 2:9 (Eng. 2:5). In 1 Kings 8:10-11, the priests are not able to stand and serve in the *bêt-yhwh* because the *kabôd-yhwh* and the *'ânân* filled the space. Aster understands a cultic consideration to be at work here, "It would be disrespectful to come into an area filled by the Presence of YHWH without being called upon to do so" (275). The edge of the *'ânân* indicated the edge of the *kabôd-yhwh*. The author of Zechariah 2:8-9 describes a similar image, but this time, Jerusalem is inside the phenomenon:

\[\text{wayyômer} \ 'êlîw \ rûś \ dabhêr \ 'el-hana \ 'ar \ hallâz \ lê \ 'môr \ yârâzô'î \ têšêh \ yarûsâlaim \ mêrôh \ 'âdâm \ 'êbhêmâ \ bôtôkâh \ wa'âni \ 'êhyeh-lâh \ na'âm-yhwh \ hîomat \ 'ê sâbih \ âlskâbôd \ 'êhyeh \ bôtôkâh.\]

He said to him, "Run, say to this youth: Jerusalem shall dwell like an unwalled settlement, because of the abundance of people and livestock within her. I myself will be to her (oracle of Yahweh!) a wall of fire all around, and I will be a *kabôd* indeed within her."

In addition to the political security and economic abundance promised here, the image foretells a time of eschatological divine presence. The phenomenon marking the boundary of the divine presence encompasses all of Jerusalem. It addition to its protective role, the wall of fire reveals that the city itself is *within* the *kabôd*. All the inhabitants of the city will enjoy the company of the divine presence, a contrast to former times when the *kabôd* was restricted to the temple and even priests could not enter it.

\(^{227}\) Aster, *Unbeatable Light*, 275. Aster argues that this is an important cultic consideration; entering the space occupied by the *kabôd* would be a sacrilege.
According to Aster, Israelite kābôd and Mesopotamian melammu are not historical parallels. A few instances of Yahweh's kābôd appearing as fire led earlier scholars to equate the kābôd with radiant melammu. Aster demonstrates that the basic sense of melammu is the power to inspire terror, a power that which first-millennium BCE Assyrian artists depict and describe with motifs of radiance and fire. Yahweh can also inspire terror. In Exodus 14:24, he casts a glance from the pillar of cloud and fire and "panics" (wayyāhām) the Egyptian camp. The verb hmm describes Yahweh's actions in several narratives. In Exodus 23:27, Yahweh's 'émā has characteristics of a hypostasis; it is something Yahweh can send into Canaan before of Israel to terrify the land's inhabitants. What becomes apparent when reviewing descriptions Yahwistic hmm is that none of them are paired with a mention of the kābôd-yhwh. Moreover, not every mention of Yahweh's kābôd accompanies an expression of divine lethality. This is well illustrated in 2 Chronicles 7:3, when the manifestation of the kābôd-yhwh causes not panic but hódôt (praise). Another significant difference is that melammu covers the bearer, and can be bestowed or removed, as illustrated in the Enuma Elish when Ea carries of Apsû's melammu (see above, pp. 81). Kābôd, on the other hand, is not a covering that can be given or taken away; it is instead the perceptible presence of Yahweh, and his inalienable possession. Such manifestations can be frightening, but

228 Weinfeld, TDOT, 30-31, and 1983, 132, noting especially Exodus 16:10, Exodus 40:34, and Numbers 17:7 (MT) [16:42 (NRSV)].

229 Aster, Unbeatable Light, 45, 101.


231 Aster, Unbeatable Light, 227. Significantly, a kābôd is attributed both to Jacob (the Israelite community) in Isaiah 17:4 and to the author of Psalm 16:9. Neither of these instances of kābôd implies that it was conferred by Yahweh or taken from him. In fact, in both cases, the kābôd seems to be something
the primary purpose of kābōd, unlike melammu, is not to inspire terror, but rather to indicate the localized presence of Yahweh and inspire awe. Divine lethality, although it can accompany the appearance of the kābōd-ḥwh, does not typify its manifestation in the way that potential lethality typified the appearance of puluhtu and melammu.

Aster believes Ezekiel was influenced by the mid-first millennium BCE Assyrian artistic tradition.232 Aster argues here that although Ezekiel inherited a consistent understanding of the description of the kābōd-ḥwh, he did not inherit a consistent tradition of its depiction. In other words, he knew what it was but not what it looked like. As Aster demonstrated, the kābōd-ḥwh can appear with any number of "intangible yet visual" indicators, including cloud and fire, or simply as perceptible presence left unspecified by the biblical authors.233 This left Ezekiel free to draw on Assyrian iconography for his verbal depiction of the kābōd-ḥwh. Comparisons between Ezekiel 1 and the British Museum tile discussed above (see above, pgs. 66-68) have yielded a number of insights into Ezekiel's iconographic program. Aster notes that Ezekiel's description of Yahweh's kābōd also includes two levels of radiance: an inner 'ēš and an outer nōgah, surrounding a being whose body contains fire above and is covered with fire below.234 Aster finds in this an actual historical parallel. "Thus, both Ezekiel and New-

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inherent to the bearer, leading Benjamin Sommer to claim that the word kābōd is another word for the individual's or deity's material body. (Benjamin Sommer, The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008], 60.)

232 Aster, Unbeatable Light, 311-315.

233 Aster, Unbeatable Light, 290. In his comments on Exodus 33:21-22, Aster states, "In verse 22, God states, 'and as My kabod (sic) passes by, I will put you in a cleft of the rock and shield you with My hand.' The continuation of v. 22 refers to the passing-by of the kabod, but does not use the word kebodi. Instead, the verse states "until I have passed by." ...These verses make clear the equation between God's kabod and His self. Kebod YHWH does not refer to an outward or physical sign, distinct from YHWH, such as a halo or an aureole. It refers to God's being present." Aster, Unbeatable Light, 265.

234 Aster, Unbeatable Light, 313. Unlike Pritchard, who described the lower half of Aššur as covered with feathers, Aster believes that the long, oval structures are flames.
Assyrian art depict a doubly-bifurcated radiance, with an inner layer and an outer layer, and an upper part and a lower part.\textsuperscript{235} The fire and radiance that Ezekiel describes around and on Yahweh's kābōd is the same as the radiant divine melammu the unknown Assyrian artist painted around Aššur.

As Aster demonstrated, Ezekiel works within a tradition that describes the kābōd-yhwh with a number of intangible yet visual images. In Assyrian melammu imagery, which by the mid-first millennium included an abundance of radiant imagery, Ezekiel found another tradition of intangible and powerful visual images. He combined it with a highly detailed description of the storm imagery and Yahweh's wheeled throne to describe his encounter with the God of Israel. Ezekiel's vision does not demonstrate that the kābōd-yhwh was inherently fiery. It demonstrates that the kābōd-yhwh was the divine presence made perceptible by intangible yet visible phenomena, in this case, the bifurcated radiance of Assyrian melammu. Furthermore, the presence of Ṛēš and nōgah in Ezekiel 1 draw on a tradition similar to that attested in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18. Ezekiel's vision takes traditional Israelite motifs and arrays them in Assyrian fashion to describe the intangible presence of the deity.

Ezekiel's encounter with Yahweh is an encounter with a fiery being. This fire is not the product of Yahweh's wrath or a weapon against his enemies, as one finds in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18. The manifestation of the fire in the cloud and in the wheelwork is strongly related to storm imagery. As Greenberg points out, such a storm image could come either from traditional storm-theophanies or firsthand observations of

\textsuperscript{235} Aster, \textit{Unbeatable Light}, 313.
Mesopotamian weather. Either way, Ezekiel begins his progressive description of Yahweh's fiery anthropomorphic *tômûnâ* in storm imagery: he comes from the north in a *rûaḥ sa’ārâ*, with *'ānān, 'ēš mitlaqqaḥat*, and with *nōgah*, all of which appear in other storm images or describe the activity of thunder and lightning.

Unlike the author of 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18, Ezekiel does not describe Yahweh with mundane anthropomorphic details like ears, nostrils, a mouth (also a feature of the *kābôd* narrative of Exodus 33:20), feet, and a voice. True, Ezekiel describes a voice (*qôl*, 1:25), loins (*motnayim*, 1:27), and that Yahweh had the *domût kamar’ēh *'ādām* (1:26). The word *qôl*, however, also means "thunder." With the other storm imagery, this reference reminds the reader that this is a being with the power and scale of a thunderstorm. Likewise, the *'ādām*, was surrounded by a two layers of awe-inspiring refugence and clad in fire above and below the waist. Ezekiel used fire and radiance to demonstrate the cosmic power of the superhuman being in his vision.

Ezekiel's description of the *kôbôd-yhwh* bears a number of resemblances to the Mesopotamian tradition of divine *melammu* and *puluḫtu*. One cannot extrapolate from that fact that other instances of the *kôbôd-yhwh* were parallels of *melammu* and *puluḫtu*. In fact, the careful way that Ezekiel introduces his vision with traditional Israelite storm motifs and only then moves into *melammu* indicates that he was likely interpreting a foreign concept for his audience, moving from a traditional to a novel image.

In the light of Aster's conclusions, one must take a nuanced approach to comparisons between the *kôbôd-yhwh* of the Hebrew Bible and Mesopotamian *melammu* and *puluḫtu*. Aster indeed demonstrates that Mesopotamian imagery influenced Ezekiel,

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and that the fiery radiance of Ezekiel 1 refers to the similar fiery nature of Mesopotamian *melammu* and *puluḫtu*. Aster also demonstrates that many mentions of the *kəbōd-yhwh* reveal religious imagination at work that is different from the one behind Mesopotamian *melammu*. The assertions of Weinfeld and others that the *kəbōd-yhwh* is consistently a divine "firecloud" do not stand up to scrutiny. The *kəbōd-yhwh* is fiery at times, as in Exodus 24:17 (on this passage, see below, pg. 91), but at other times it is simply a cloud (Exodus 16:10), or is not described with any phenomenon (Leviticus 9:23). In the light of Aster's conclusions, then, one can say that the *kəbōd-yhwh* is only fiery at times, and that only in Ezekiel 1 does it show clear influence of Neo-Assyrian images of *melammu* and *puluḫtu*. It is otherwise a native Israelite phenomenon describing the perceptible presence of Yahweh.

### III. Non-Anthropomorphic Yahwistic Fire

#### A. The Theophany at Sinai

2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18 along with Ezekiel 1 and 8 describe Yahweh with both anthropological and storm motifs. Yet a much larger group of passages describes Yahweh's presence solely with fiery motifs drawn from storm imagery. The theophany at Sinai in Exodus, the pillar of fire in the desert, and the Deuteronomistic Sinai theophany each present non-anthropomorphic fiery images as the main motif for Yahweh's active presence.

1. *Exodus 19:18-19*
The first text to consider is the JE (i.e. non-P) theophany found in Exodus 19:18-19. The text describes Yahweh's appearance just before he delivers the covenant verbally to Israel through Moses at Sinai.

Mount Sinai was entirely smoking because Yahweh had come down on it in fire, and its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, and the entire mountain was shaking very much. The sound of the trumpet increased in strength. Moses spoke and God answered him in thunder.

In this theophany, fire is the primary indication of Yahweh's presence. Although the text indicates that Yahweh had yārad (come down), this localized presence lacks clear anthropomorphic motifs and uses only fire, smoke, trumpet, and thunder to indicate the divine presence.

Although this image might at first seem volcanic, most commentators argue that it is a description of a storm. The smoke "rises" like that of a kiln, but only because Yahweh first yārad (descended) like a storm onto Sinai. If the image does not easily fit into any known natural category, Propp, Noth, and others claim, it is because the author was describing something that could have only happened once in history. The fire accompanies Yahweh's motion toward the earth, and his preparation to present his

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238 Retroverted LXX has wayyehērad kol-hāʾām (all the people trembled) for MT's wayyehērad kol-hāhār (the entire mountain trembled). This is likely due to confusion with Exodus 19:16, which reads wayyehērad kol-haššôārāhār.

239 Martin Noth (*Exodus: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962], 159) thinks of the image as volcanic, but does not address it in detail. Cross (*Canaanite Myth*, 169) and Propp (*Exodus 19-40*, 164) argue persuasively that it is a storm.

covenant to Israel. Fire and smoke here reveal Yahweh's awe-inspiring presence. Throughout the Sinai narrative, fire repeatedly appears when Yahweh is in motion and when he is speaking the words of the covenant to Israel.

2. Exodus 24:17

This passage, from the P source, is like a closing bracket to the narrative that began in Exodus 19. It describes the appearance of Yahweh just after Israel's acceptance of the oral transmission of the covenant (Exodus 24:3). At the end of the narrative, in Exodus 24:16-18a, Moses ascends the mountain to receive the written record of the covenant cut at Sinai.

The glory of Yahweh settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day he called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. The appearance of the glory of Yahweh was like a devouring fire on the peak of the mountain before the eyes of the people of Israel. Moses went into the cloud, and ascended the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights. (Exodus 24:16-18a)²⁴¹

The narrative of Exodus 24:16-18a recapitulates the JE narrative of Exodus 19:18-19. Exodus 24:16-18a also sets up the narrative found in Exodus 40:34-38, which uses language similar to that of 24:16-18a to describe Yahweh as he takes up residence in the miškān.

²⁴¹ Noth, Exodus, 200-201; Propp, Exodus 19-40, 142. Propp notes that these verses introduce the narrative of Exodus 25-31, 35-40, which he calls "the parade example of the Priestly Source" (Exodus 19-40, 366).
In Exodus 24:16-18a, the Yahwistic presence is described as the kəbôd-yhwh. As discussed in the excursus above, the kəbôd-yhwh is the intangible yet perceptible divine presence. The motifs that make the kəbôd-yhwh perceptible here are storm images, specifically devouring fire and cloud, both of which have appeared before in this study. Unlike the author of Ezekiel's visions, the priestly writer mentions no domût kəmar’ēh 'ādām; the only feint toward anthropomorphic imagery is the voice that speaks to Moses. Storm images do the entire work of revealing the kābôd.

Though both fire and cloud are present in this pericope, careful attention reveals that only fire manifests the divine presence. The author says as much in Exodus 24:17: ūmar’ēh kəbôd yhwh kə’ēš ōkelet bərōʾ ŕāhār (And the appearance of the kəbôd yhwh was like a devouring fire on the peak of the mountain). It is just as revealing that Moses is able to enter the cloud. His ability to do so indicates that the cloud is not the phenomenon that marks the edge of the divine presence. When the cloud makes the kəbôd yhwh perceptible, as it does in Exodus 40:35, Moses cannot enter it (cf. 1 Kings 8:10b-11a). In Exodus 24:18, the cloud is secondary to the fire that reveals the kəbôd yhwh. Moses must enter the cloud in order to confer with the fiery divine presence within. Thus the ōkelet is the phenomenon that manifests the intangible kəbôd-yhwh.

In summary, these two passages represent two non-anthropomorphic images in which fire is the primary motif for Yahweh's active presence on earth. In both cases, the fire on Sinai is the sign of Yahweh's localized and otherwise unseen presence. In both cases, too, Yahweh is entering the frame of the narrative in order to affect the outcome. In fact, following what Propp and others have said, the authors mustered these Yahwistic motifs with the purpose of describing Yahweh's one-of-a-kind intervention in history: the
granting of the covenant to Israel. In this case, the fire that represents Yahweh in Exodus 19 and the \textit{kəbōd-}\textit{yhw} in Exodus 24 is intended to indicate the divine presence in the act of transforming history.

\textit{B. Fire and Cloud in the Wilderness Journey}

\textit{1. The Pillar of Fire and of Cloud}

In the pentateuchal narratives, fire and cloud lead Israel through the desert. Like the passages already discussed, fire here manifests Yahweh's presence when he travels before Israel through the desert or descends in an act of self-revelation.\textsuperscript{242} The fire and cloud first appear in the form of an \textit{`ammūd} (a pillar) at the crossing of the sea in the JE (non-P) narrative of Exodus 13:21-22, where the pillar is the "vehicle" in which Yahweh travels as he leads Israel. The tradition appears in the P texts as well with only one difference: P includes no mention of the \textit{`ammūd}. The fire and cloud appear without a description of their shape.

The following passages mention the pillar of fire.

Exodus 13:21-22\textsuperscript{243}
\textit{wayhwh hōlēk lipnēhem yōmām boʾammūd ṭānān lanōhōtām hadderek wālaylā boʾammūd ṭēš lōhā ʿir lāleket yōmām wālaylā lōʾ yāmiš \textit{`ammūd} heʾṭanān yōmām woʾammūd hāʾēš lāyālā lipnē hāʾām}

Yahweh went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire, to give light to them to travel day

\textsuperscript{242} Not included in this discussion are the narratives of the burning bush (Exodus 3:2, pgs. 159-163), the fiery hail (Exodus 9:23-24, pgs. 129-131), and the \textit{ʾēš-yhw} in Numbers 11:1-3 (pgs. 139-140), and the Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram in Numbers 15-16 (pgs. 179-181). Each of these passages receives analysis elsewhere in this study.

\textsuperscript{243} Noth, \textit{Exodus}, 105. Noth attributes this passage to the J source. William H. Propp (\textit{Exodus 1-18: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary} [Anchor Bible Commentary; New York: Doubleday, 1996], 476), while noting the complexity of the discussion of this text, ultimately attributes it to the combined JE source.
and night. The pillar of cloud did not depart by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

Exodus 14:24

wayyōhî bəʾāsmōret habbōger wayyaṣqēp ywhh ‘el-mahānēh misrayim bəʾammūd ’ēš wəʿānān wayyāhom ‘ēt mahānēh misrāyim

At the morning watch, Yahweh, in the pillar of fire and cloud, looked down upon the Egyptian camp, and panicked the Egyptian camp.

Numbers 14:13-14

wayyōmer mōšēh ‘el-ywhh wəšāmō ’ū misrayim kī-heʾēlītā bokōhākā ’et-hāʾām hazzeḥ miqqirbō wəʿāmrū ‘el-yōṣēb hāʾāreṣ hazzōʾū kī-ʾattā ywhh bəqereb hāʾām hazzeḥ ’āšer-ʾayin bəʾayin nirʾā ’attā ywhh waʿānānākā ʾōmed ʾālēhem ūbəʾammud ʿānān ʾāṭṭā hōlēk līpnēhem yōmām ūbəʾammūd ’ēš ʾāylaʾā

But Moses said to Yahweh, “Then the Egyptians will hear, for in your might you brought this people up from among them, and they will tell the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that you, Yahweh, are in the midst of this people; for you, Yahweh, appear in plain sight and your cloud stands over them and in a pillar of cloud you go in front of them by day and in a pillar of fire by night.

Worth noting here, too are Nehemiah 9: 12, 19:

ūbəʾammūd ʿānān hinhītām yōmām ūbəʾammūd ’ēš laylā lēhā ʿîr lāhem ’et-hadderek ʿāšer yēlēkū-bāḥ

In a pillar of cloud you led them by day, and in a pillar of fire at night, to illumine for them the way that they should go.

wəʾattā hōrahāmēkā hārabbīm lōʾ ʿazabtām bammidbār ’et-ʾammūd heʾānān lōʾ-ṣārā ʾālēhem bōyōmām lōhanhōtām bəḥadderek wəʾet-ʾammūd hāʾēš bəlaylā lēhā ʿîr lāhem wəʾet-hadderek ʿāšer yēlēkū-bāḥ.


246 This is the NJPS translation of the difficult ʿāšer-ʿayin bəʾayin nirʿā.
You in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness; the pillar of cloud did not leave them by day to lead them on the road, nor the pillar of fire by night to illumine the way that that they should go.

Comparing these passages to each other brings some facts into light, and also raises some questions. First, mentions of the pillar of fire almost always accompany movement. The panic-inducing theophany in Exodus 14:24 is the only exception. Second, the pillar of fire never appears alone; it always accompanies the pillar of cloud. The reverse is not true: in several passages, the pillar of cloud appears alone.247

Scholars have questioned whether these texts describe a single pillar whose appearance changed from day to night, or two alternating pillars of fire and cloud. Milgrom, for example, follows Weinfeld and describes a single pillar as a "cloud-encased fire."248 Cross, as noted above, believes the root image is a single "dark but fiery storm cloud."249 Others contend that these texts describe two pillars, one of cloud and another of fire. Weinfeld, for example, believes that older traditions of distinct divine messengers of cloud and fire underlie this image, and that the Pentateuch preserves a distinction between the cloud messenger and the fire messenger.250 Aster, too, argues that the cloud and the fire are separate; with a careful reading of the Hebrew, he demonstrates that, although the fiery divine radiance is always mentioned along with the cloud, it is never inside it.251 The two are always distinct. Weinfeld's and Aster's arguments have merit.

247 Exodus 14:19; 33:9-10; Numbers 12:5; Deuteronomy 31:15; Psalm 99:7.
249 Cross, Canaanite Myth, 153 n. 30.
251 Aster, Unbeatable Light, 298-300.
Weinfeld is correct in noting the distinct mythic antecedents of the cloud and fire.

Moreover, one wonders how Moses could be described as "entering the cloud" if it were full of fire (Exodus 24:18). These facts lead many commentators to understand that the ancient tradition referred to two distinct pillars, one of cloud and one of fire.

The pillar of cloud is often mentioned by itself, without any mention of a pillar of fire. When the pillar of cloud appears by itself, it is almost always an indication that Yahweh wishes to speak to Moses (Exodus 33:9, Numbers 12:5, Deuteronomy 31:15). In these passages, when the solitary pillar of cloud descends on the ḥelō môʾēd, it is the locus of divine speech. The pillar of fire appears along with the cloud in narratives of Israel's movement through the wilderness.

2. Fire and Cloud in the P Texts

A cluster of passages describe what is essentially the same phenomenon, i.e. the cloud and the fire accompanying Israel in the wilderness, but do not specifically mention either phenomenon taking the form of a pillar. The following passages, all from the P source, narrate the appearance of the cloud and fire.

Exodus 40:34-38

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252 One should also note that Moses remains outside the cloud in Exodus 33:9 and 40:35.

253 The only exception is Exodus 14:19, where the pillar of cloud follows the angel that moves between Israel and Egypt at the Red Sea.

254 Psalm 99:7 preserves another tradition in which Yahweh gave his decrees and statutes out of the pillar of cloud.

255 The source criticism on Exodus 40:34-38 is complicated. K. Koch (Die Priesterschrift von Exodus 25 bis Leviticus 16, Forschungen zur Religion und Literar des Alten und Neuen Testaments 71 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1959], 45-46) argues that Exodus 40:34-35 was P material that immediately preceded Leviticus 1:1. Noth (Exodus, 283) attributes these verses to the hand of a post-P redactor, drawing on Numbers 9:15-20 to create a bridge between Exodus and the narratives that followed. E. Ben Zvi ("The Closing Words of Pentateuchal Books" Biblische Notizen 62 [1992]: 7-10) attributes only Exodus 40:36-38

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wayókas he’ānān ‘et-‘ōhel mō‘ēd ūkôbōd ywhw mālē’ ‘et-hammishkān wałō’ yāḵōl mōsēh lābō’ ‘el-‘ōhel mō‘ēd kī-šākan ‘ālāyv he’ānān ūkôbōd ywhw mālē’ ‘et-hammishkān ūḇôhē’ālōt he’ānān mē’al hammishkān yis’ū bonē yisrā’ēl bōkōl maṣ‘ēhem wa’im-lō’ yē’āleḥ he’ānān wałō’ yis’ū ‘ad-yōm ā’ālōtō kī ‘ānān ywhw ‘al-hammishkān yōmām wo’ēs tihyeh laylā bō lō’ēnē kōl-bēt-yisrā’ēl bōkōl-maṣ‘ēhem

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle. Moses was not able to go into the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it and the glory of Yahweh filled the tabernacle.

When the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on all their journeys. If the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out until the day of its ascension. For the cloud of Yahweh was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was at night within it, before the eyes of all the house of Israel on each of their journeys.

Numbers 9:15-20


On the day the tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered the tabernacle, the tent of the covenant; and in the evening, something like the appearance of fire was over the tabernacle until morning. Thus it was always: the cloud covered it, and an appearance of fire by night. When the cloud lifted from

to the hand of the final Pentateuchal redactor, following Koch that 40:34-35 was the Priestly editor. R. E. Friedman (Who Wrote the Bible? [New York: Summit, 1987], 252) meanwhile gives the entire passage to P, and attributes Numbers 9:15-20 to the hand of the redactor. In any case, they are rooted in the P material that surrounds them.


Propp follows the SamP reading, bō laylā, arguing that original bō laylā lō’ēnē became bō lō’ēnē due to homoiorkon, after which time the laylā was reinserted (Exodus 19-40, 658).

257 Noth assigns these verses to the P source (Numbers, 71-73).

258 MT ʿulepī hēʾālōt, due to confusion with the next verse. LXX is kai« hJni+ka ajne/bh.
over the tent, then the Israelites would set out; and in the place where the cloud settled down, there the Israelites would camp. At the command of Yahweh the Israelites would set out, and at the command of Yahweh they would camp. All the days that the cloud dwelt over the tabernacle, they camped. When the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days, the Israelites kept the charge of Yahweh, and they did not set out. Sometimes the cloud remained a few days over the tabernacle, and according to the command of Yahweh, they camped; and according to the command of Yahweh they set out.

Deuteronomy 1:32-33

ubaddābār hazeh ’ēnokem maʾāminīm bāyhw ’ēlōhēkem, hahōlēk lipnēkem baderek lāṭūr lākem mākōm lahānōtškem bāʾēš laylā larō ’ōtokem baderek ’āser tēlokū-bāh ūbeʾānān yōmān

But in spite of this, you have no trust in Yahweh your God, who goes before you on the way to seek out a place for you to camp, in fire by night to show you the route you should take, and in cloud by day. (Cf. Num 10-33-34)

In the epic source (JE, non-P), the pillars of fire and of cloud in Exodus 13:21-22 and elsewhere do not seem to be related to the fire and smoke of Exodus 19:18. The P source that underlies Exodus 24:16-18 and Exodus 40:34-38 does relate the two. In Exodus 24:16-18, kābōd-yhw ”settles” on Sinai, with the appearance of a devouring fire, and a cloud covers it. In Exodus 40:34-38, the cloud covers and then settles on the ’ōhel mōʾēd, and the cloud and fire take up residence over and in the miškān. The P source uses similar language when describing the appearance of the kābōd-yhw on Sinai and in the miškān as a way of expressing the identity of the cultic kābōd with the kābōd of Sinai.

Just as the JE pillar of cloud appeared without the pillar of fire, so the P cloud appears at times without mention of fire. Aside from Numbers 10:33-34, the cloud appears alone in Exodus 34:5, Numbers 10:11-12, Numbers 11:24-25, and Numbers 17:7-10 (Eng 16:42-45). Unlike the pillar of cloud references, which almost always contained a reference to Yahweh speaking at the ’ōhel mōʾēd, P’s references to cloud are
not so easy to categorize. Yahweh does speak when the cloud alone appears in Exodus 34:5, Numbers 11:25, and Numbers 17:9. The cloud alone leads Israel through the desert in Numbers 10:11-12 and 10:33-34, something that in the "pillar" tradition only occurred when the pillar of fire was mentioned too.

3. The Relationship of the Fire with Yahweh

The relationship between Yahweh and the fire and cloud is complex. Some scholars claim that the cloud and fire descend from traditions of the storm deity. Others believe that the pillar and the Sinai theophany are both descriptions of a volcanic eruption. The fact that the fire descends on Sinai from above, and that it and the cloud travel before Israel indicate that the storm tradition is more likely the source of the image. Holzinger, Milgrom, and Weinfeld draw on storm-theophany traditions to claim that Yahweh is present in the pillar. Descriptions of the pillar sometimes accompany anthropomorphic imagery: Yahweh casts a glance from the pillar (Exodus 14:24), Yahweh speaks from the pillar (Exodus 33:9, Psalm 99:7), and Yahweh travels in the pillar as he scouts out the path (Deuteronomy 1:32-33). The kōbōd yhwh settles (Exodus 24:16) and ascends (Exodus 40:36) in the cloud and fire of the P narrative. Exodus 14:19 relates the pillar not to the kōbōd yhwh but rather to the malʾak hāʾēlōhîm. Other scholars find evidence that the pillar is something supernatural but not divine. Mann, for

259 Mann, "Pillar," 15-17; Lippiński, Royauté, 249; Cross, Canaanite Myth, 153 n. 30.

260 Hugo Gressmann, Mose und Seine Zeit: ein Kommentar zu den Mose-Sagen, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), 118-120; Noth, Exodus, 106-109, 156.


262 Mendenhall, Tenth Generation, 54-56, 59. Propp, Exodus 1-18, 549.
example, believes it to be a reference to the divine chariot. P's cloud resembles the cultic cloud-curtain of Ps 105:39 and the cloud-ḥuppā in Isaiah 4:5. Later tradition recalls Yahweh's presence in the pillar (Nehemiah 9:12, Psalm 99:7); coupled with the several references of Yahweh within the pillar, one can sketch the outlines of a tradition that understood the pillar as Yahweh's localized presence and also as the vehicle in which he travelled.

A tradition found in P indicates that the kəbōd yhwh had the appearance of fire. The appearance of the kəbōd yhwh in Exodus 24:17 was like an 'ēš 'ōkelet, "a devouring fire" (see pgs. 90-91). The fire appears alone, without a cloud. This helps clarify an ambiguity in the P narrative of Exodus Exodus 40:38:

\[
\text{kī 'ānan yhwh 'al-hammiškān yômām wā'ēš tihyeh laylā bō lō'ēnē kol-bēt-
\text{yiśrā'ēl bokol-mas'ēhem}
\]

For the cloud of Yahweh was on the tabernacle by day, and fire was in it nightly, before the eyes of all the house of Israel on each of their journeys.

The text indicates that the fire is bō, "in it", which means either that it is in the 'ānān or in the miškān. In the light of Exodus 24:17 it is more likely that the fire was in the miškān. Either masculine singular noun can be the antecedent of bō. That miškān is preferable to 'ānān comes from the fact that Exodus 24:17 describes the kəbōd yhwh as an 'ēš 'ōkelet with no mention of cloud. This strengthens the disjunction between the cloud and fire implied in Exodus 40:34, which relates that the kəbōd yhwh filled the miškān, but that the cloud covered the 'ōhel mō'ēd. Unlike the pillar of fire and pillar of cloud, which in the JE (non-P) tradition provided a vehicle for Yahweh to travel with Israel, the P tradition imagines the 'ēš, which had appeared on the mountain and was perpetually visible in the

\[\text{263 Mann, "Pillar," 23.}\]
miškān at night, to be the phenomenon that made Yahweh's localized presence perceptible to Israel.

Although the "pillar" tradition found in JE (non-P) sources locates the fire and cloud differently than those of the P tradition, such a difference does not affect the identification of either type of fire with Yahweh's localized presence. The pillar of fire and cloud goes before (lipnē) Israel, while in P texts, fire and cloud cover (ksh) a specific sacred place (Sinai in Exodus 24:16, the ōhel móʾēd in Exodus 40:34, or the miškān in Numbers 9:15). The language of Numbers 14:14 (see above, pg. 94) suggests both traditions, but without key vocabulary.

waʾānānokā ŏmēd ŏléhem ūbɔʾammud ānān ʾattā hōlēk lipnēhem yōmām ūbɔʾammūd ʾēš läylā.

Your cloud stands over them, and in a pillar of cloud you go before them by day, and in a pillar of fire at night.

Numbers 14:14 contains two cloud traditions. The cloud that "stands over them" resembles the cloud-māsāk of Psalm 105:39 or the cloud-ḥuppā of Isaiah 4:5. The passage also includes a pillar of fire and of cloud like that of the JE tradition. These pillars of fire and cloud are similar to the fire and cloud in Deuteronomy 1:32-33, in that they do not cover the sacred place (ksh as in Exodus 40 and Numbers 9) but rather scout out the path for Israel. In either case, when Yahweh is in motion, he travels in the cloud and fire.

To conclude, several things can be stated about the use of fire and the cloud as motifs on the wilderness journey. First, as already indicated, fire is never mentioned, either as a pillar or in nonspecific form, without the cloud. The cloud is the dominant

264 The scouting, non-pillar of cloud also appears in Numbers 1:33-34.
image in these texts. Second, fire here is rarely mentioned in the context of Yahweh's speech. As the next part of this chapter will show, this is significantly different from what one finds in Deuteronomy, in which fire is the primary locus of divine speech. Only two P texts combine fire and divine speech (Exodus 24:16-18 and 40:34-38), a tradition also preserved in Psalm 99:7. Third, when fire appears it almost always accompanies Israel's movement. The cloud can appear in a variety of contexts, but when fire appears with the cloud, either in pillar form or simply as "fire" and "cloud" in P texts, then either Yahweh or Israel is on the move (Numbers 14:14). The only exception is Exodus 14:24, in which Yahweh panics the Egyptians with a glance from the pillar of fire.

C. Fire in Deuteronomy

The book of Deuteronomy contains the clearest example of non-anthropomorphic fire as a sign of Yawhistic presence. Much has been made of Deuteronomy's use of the role of Yahweh's šēm as an aniconic symbol of his presence. Rarely if at all noted is Deuteronomy's use of Yahweh's fire as an indicator divine presence. Turning now to non-anthropomorphic images of Yahweh, one encounters two fiery motifs from Deuteronomy that help to shed light on Yawhistic fire. The first motif is the qōl mittôk hāʾēš, "the voice from the midst of the fire" found in several passages in Deuteronomy, and the second is the comparison of Yahweh to a 'ēš 'ōkelet and 'ēš 'ōkålā, "devouring...

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fire." These passages demonstrate that the presence of Yahweh is often revealed by fiery phenomena on earth.

1. The Voice From the Fire

A vivid image of preternatural fire appears in Deuteronomy eight times. It is the image of the qôl mittôk hāʾēš, the voice of Yahweh speaking from the midst of the fire. In this image, Yahweh's activity is not demonstrated with verbs of motion, but rather through speech "from the midst of the fire." Speech-as-action was also a feature of Yahweh's activity when he spoke his prophetic message to Ezekiel, although in that narrative it was coupled with divine movement. In Deuteronomy, the active divine presence is marked by its ability to communicate with Israel and inspire both wonder and fear.

The first instance of this motif comes in Deuteronomy 4:11-12:

\[\text{wattiqrəbūn watta} \text{'}amədūn tahat hāhār wəhāhār bōʾ ēr hāʾēš } \text{'}ad-lēb haššāmayim hōšek } \text{'}ānān wa } \text{'}ārāpēl wayōdabber yhwh } \text{'}ālēkem mittōk hāʾēš qōl dōbārim } \text{'}attem šōmō } \text{'}im ūtōmūnā } \text{'}ĕnokem rō } \text{'}im zūlātī qōl\]

You approached and you stood at the base of the mountain, when the mountain was burning in fire up into the middle of the sky - there was darkness, cloud, and thick gloom - and Yahweh spoke to you from the midst of the fire: the voice of the words you yourselves heard, but a (concrete) form you did not see; there was only a voice.

This passage is the Deuteronomic version of the narrative also recorded in the JE-source in Exodus 19:18 and the P-source in 24:17. Although smoke, fire, and trembling earth

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can indicate Yahweh's storm-aspect, and the double-entendre of qôl means both
"thunder" and "voice," these texts mention no precipitation or wind.\footnote{Lewis demonstrates that the meanings of qôl as both "voice" and "thunder" follows a pattern of "transcendent anthropomorphism" found throughout the Hebrew scriptures (The Religion of Ancient Israel [Anchor Bible Reference Library; New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming], Chapter 7). Deities speaking through thunder appear in the religious literature of many ancient Near Eastern cultures (Weinfeld, "Divine Intervention," 121-124, 141-143. Dennis Pardee, "On Psalm 29: Structure and Meaning," The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception [Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 99; Leiden: Brill, 2005], 167).}

In the Deuteronomic tradition, these storm motifs have undergone a metamorphosis. The use of these motifs in Deuteronomy is less a traditional description of a storm and more a way to indicate the unexpected and unique nature of this theophany.\footnote{Propp, Exodus 19-40, 164.}

The author of Deuteronomy separates 'ēš and qôl from other storm motifs and employs them together to indicate Yahweh's presence. The Deuteronomic author knew of earlier storm-motifs; he indicates as much by his use of hôšek, āšān, and the mysterious 'ārāpel, a word often used in parallel with hôšek, to indicate a type of darkness. This is a wider list of motifs than the ones found in Exodus 19:18, and actually mirrors the list found in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18:9-10. But again, any actual mention of a meteorological event is missing; the text includes no mention of rain or moisture.

As a background to Deuteronomy's use of 'ēš and qôl as motifs of divine presence, it is helpful to see how they appear in Psalm 29, an ancient poem that recounts a storm theophany and recapitulates Yahweh's victory over the waters.\footnote{The similarities between this psalm and Ugaritic poetry led Ginsberg to propose an early Iron Age date for its composition, a position many scholars today still hold. L. Ginsberg, "A Phoenician Hymn in the Psalter," Atti XIX Congresso intrenazionale degli Orientalisti (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1938) 472-476.} Well-known storm motifs appear including hirʾîm (to thunder, 29:3), mayīm rabbîm (mighty waters, 29:3), earthquake (29:6, 8), mighty, whirling winds (29:5, 9), and 'ēš (fire, 29:7). Each...
of these is the effect of the qôl yhwh, which throughout Psalm 29 can mean either "thunder" or "voice." In Psalm 29:7, 'ēš is one of the effects of the qôl-yhwh:

qôl-yhwh ḫōṣēb laḥābōt 'ēš  The thunder/voice of Yahweh splits flames of fire

The precise nuance of ḫōṣēb is a matter of discussion, although most of the proposed translations render it with words like "flashing" or "sparking," indicating a kind of fire that flares up with sudden brilliance. If so, then the 'ēš here would be lightning, the cause and companion of qôl. In his comments on Psalm 29, Mays emphasizes that the qôl-yhwh becomes its own actor,

the subject of attributions and verbs... The poet is putting a certain distance between the Lord and the storm. The voice stands between the two and is a virtual surrogate of God. What is there to be perceived in occurrence and poetry is not God himself but a medium through which his power and majesty (verse 4) are perceptible. It is his glory.271

In Psalm 29, Yahweh's thunderous voice mediates the divine presence. Fire is among the several storm phenomena that accompany the manifestation of the qôl, which plays the primary role.

The same situation appears in Deuteronomy. Looking at earlier poetry, one might even hazard to trace the development 'ēš and qôl as motifs of divine presence. As mentioned, the storm motifs in Deuteronomy 4:11-12 reflect the tradition found in 2 Samuel 22:9-10, 14, and Psalm 18:10, 14. The tradition in Deuteronomy 4:11-12 also reflects the Sinai tradition in Exodus 19:18, and the privileging of 'ēš and qôl reflects at least to some extent the tradition in Psalm 97:3. In Deuteronomy, the specialized use the motifs 'ēš and qôl, and the Deuteronomic theology that depends on them, casts into high

relief the unique theophany at Sinai. These ancient motifs, which already had a long history Yahwistic texts as mediators of the divine presence, now take on a central role in the Deuteronomic religious imagination as perceptible yet intangible phenomena indicating Yahweh's presence.

Aster notes that Deuteronomy employs fire to construct several arguments. First, he notes that fire manifests Yahweh's power and inspires fear in Israel. For example, Deuteronomy 5:4-5 reads:

\[
pānim bōpānim dibber yhw\ 'immākem bāhār mīttōk hāʾēš ʾānōki ṕōmed bēn-yhwū ēt hāhī\ ṕēhaggīd lākem ʾet-dēbar yhwī kī yērēʾtem mīpponē hāʾēš wēlōʾ ʿālītem bāhār
\]

Face to face, Yahweh spoke with you on the mountain from the midst of the fire. I was standing between Yahweh and you on that day to declare to you the words of Yahweh because you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain.

Because of the lack of complex borrowing, Aster believes this is a typological, not historical, parallel to fiery, fear inspiring *melammu* and *puluḫtu*. The typological parallel is noteworthy. The author of Deuteronomy uses this fear-inducing quality of fire to set the stage for a life-giving covenant. The author of Deuteronomy imagined an Israel that had to be scared to death before it could "choose life, so you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

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273 Deuteronomy 4:33; 18:16
274 Qērē: *hāhī‘*. Ḵtīb: *hhw‘*
A second argument, and the one that most commentators focus on, is that this preternatural fire plays an important role in the Deuteronomic prohibition of images.276 “You saw no concrete form (ṯōmûnā) when Yahweh spoke to you out of the fire.” Just as several different perceptible yet intangible phenomena manifested the priestly kəḇôḏ yhwh, fire reveals the visual presence of Yahweh in Deuteronomy. But unlike Ezekiel, who beheld a fiery kəḇôḏ yhwh that also had anthropomorphic features, the author of Deuteronomy insists in 4:12:

\[
gōl dəbārîm ‘attem šōmā’îm, ūṭōmûnā ‘ēnəkem rōʾîm, zūlāti qōl
\]

You heard the voice of the words, but a form you did not see, only a voice.

Even more importantly, the author notes that the only visual phenomenon connected to the voice was the fire (4:36):

\[
\text{min-hāššāmayim hišmî ’ākā ‘et-qōlō ləyassərekā wə’al-hā ’āreš herəkā ‘et-’iśṣō haggədəlā údəbərāyw šāma’îā mittōk hā’ēš}
\]

from heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you, and on earth he made you see his great fire, and his words you heard from the midst of the fire.

Deuteronomy's prohibition of any divine image stems from the fact that Israel did, in fact, stand in the divine presence at one time and saw only fire. No graven or cast image could reproduce the experience for later generations. Even a depiction of fire, as Lewis notes, would fall short, as fire loses its essential light, heat, and energy, when it is painted, molded, or engraved.277


277 Lewis, Religion, chapter 7.
A debate has raged for quite some time over Deuteronomy's perception of Yahweh's relationship to the fire. Some commentators believe that Yahweh remains in heaven in Deuteronomy, and places the fire on the earth as a symbolic locus for his voice. Others believe that Yahweh's presence in Deuteronomy was in fact localized in the fire in some way. As an example of an interpreter who favors the former understanding, consider Stephen Geller's comment, "That God shuns the earth to remain forever enthroned in His heavenly abode is the universal belief of Deuteronomic thinkers." To support this claim, he presents two pieces of evidence. First, Israel, in its encounter with Yahweh, saw no tômûnâ (4:12) and heard a voice from heaven while witnessing the fire on the earth out of which the voice came (4:33, šāmâyim representing, according to Geller, the transcendent realm). Second, the formula used by the Deuteronomists to describe the temple, "the place God chose to place his name," is an unequivocal expression of divine transcendence: God shuns the earth so completely that even his own temple contains only a mediated form of his presence. In this case, the Deuteronomic prohibition of images stems from the fact that Yahweh was never present in the first place, and thus, any depiction of the divine image is a fraudulent record.

Ian Wilson argues that Deuteronomy understands a localized, earthly divine presence, distinct from a divine presence in heaven. To establish such an earthly

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279 Geller, Enigmas, 114.

280 Geller, Enigmas, 106.

281 Geller does admit that the description of the divine presence in Deuteronomy 4:11-12 allows for Yahweh to be locally present but shrouded out of view by the fire. He believes that Deut 4:36 provides a corrective to this view. ("Fiery Wisdom: Logos and Lexis in Deuteronomy 4," Prooftexts 14/2 (May 1994): 138 n. 12-13).
presence, Wilson investigates the parallels between the Tetrateuch and Deuteronomy that contain mention of the divine presence. These parallels indicate that the author of Deuteronomy did not purge mentions of localized divine presence. In one striking instance, the mention of the "finger of God" in Exodus 31:18 is repeated verbatim in Deuteronomy 9:10. This might be a well-placed mythic fragment or it might be a consciously constructed metaphor. Either way, it is a reference to the finger of God, and does not fit a program of rigorously transcendent theological claims. Wilson thus concludes that there is "no support for the view that Deuteronomy... has eliminated the Deity from the earthly sphere." In this case, the Deuteronomic prohibition of images stems from the fact that Yahweh's $t\text{\textit{omûnā}}$ was veiled from view by the fire from which Israel heard the voice. Any iconographic reproduction of that $t\text{\textit{omûnā}}$ would be fraudulent, as Israel never penetrated the veiling fire to see what was within.

With Aster's treatment of $k\text{\textit{ābôd}}$ in mind, one can get a sense of what the Deuteronomic author was communicating. The perceptible presence of Yahweh was of singular importance to the religious program outlined in Deuteronomy, which hinged on calling Israel to be faithful to a deity they had actually encountered. In Deuteronomy 4:33, 36, the encounter is significantly aural, and fire appears a concomitant, even dependent, visual phenomenon. In Deuteronomy 5:4-5, by contrast, the encounter is also visual, $p\text{\textit{a\textit{nîm b\textit{a\textit{pânîm}}}}$, although Deuteronomy 5:5 clarifies that only Moses encountered the face of Yahweh. Within the context of Deuteronomy, this "face to face" encounter was actually a twofold experience: visually it was "face to ʿēṣ," and aurally it was "ear to

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283 Wilson, *Fire*, 213.
In this instance, it is clear that the fire from the midst of which Yahweh spoke is a phenomenon analogous to the priestly kābôd. The narrative of Deuteronomy states as much when it mentions in Deuteronomy 5:24 that the sight of the kābôd accompanied the sound of his voice from the fire:

\[
\text{wattomarû hēn herə́änû yhwh ́élōhēnû ́et-kābōdô wə́et-gādalô wə́et-
qōlō šāmá́ənû mittōk hā́́ēš}
\]

You said: Look! Yahweh our God has caused us to see his kābôd and his greatness, and we have heard his voice from the midst of the fire.

Sight and sound go together in the religious imagination of Deuteronomy 5:24. The preternatural fire as well as the supernatural qôl were "intangible yet perceptible" phenomena that made Yahweh's localized presence perceptible. The unseen but present Yahweh occupied the place indicated by the preternatural fire. It was out of this fire that his qôl spoke the words of the covenant to Israel at Horeb.

In Deuteronomy, then, one finds ́ēš and qôl as privileged indicators of the active, perceptible, but still mysterious divine presence. One can trace the development of ́ēš and qôl from traditional storm motifs to motifs of the unique encounter on Sinai, and then finally to privileged motifs of the localized, perceptible yet intangible divine presence in Deuteronomy. Yahweh's activity is twofold: appearing in ́ēš and qôl to offer Israel a covenant, and revealing ́ēš and qôl to be the primary means of his representation in Deuteronomy.

C. Devouring fire

Two passages from Deuteronomy call Yahweh an ́ēš ́ōkalā, a "devouring fire."

These are:
Deuteronomy 4:24
 ki yhwh 'ĕlōhēkā 'ēš 'ōkōlā hû 'ēl qannā'
For Yahweh your god is a devouring fire, a jealous god.

Deuteronomy 9:3
wayāda’tā hayyôm ki yhwh 'ĕlōhēkā hû'-hâ'ōber lōpānēkā 'ēš 'ōkōlā hû'
yašmîdēm wōhû’ yaknî'īm lōpānēkā wōhōraštān wōhā'abātiām mahēr
ka ’āšer dibber yhwh lāk.

Know today that Yahweh your god is the one who crosses over before you as a devouring fire; he will defeat them and subdue them before you, so that you may dispossess and destroy them quickly, as Yahweh has promised you.

The pairing of the noun 'ēš with the verbal root 'kl is common in Hebrew and other Semitic languages. In Hebrew, for example, the pairing is present in 2 Samuel 22:9 // Psalm 18:9, 'ēš- mippiyw to 'kēl, "fire from his mouth devours", Amos 1:4, wāšillahti 'ēš
bōbēt ḥāzā'ēl wō'ākōlā 'ārmōnōt ben-hādād, "I will send fire on the house of Hazael and it will consume the strongholds of Ben Hadad", and Psalm 50:3, 'ēš-lōpānīyw tō 'kēl, "a fire before him devours". In cognate literature, the use of the verbal stem 'kl and nouns for "fire" appears three times in KTU 1.4 VI 24-31 (where the action is not destructive), and as already noted above, in the Akkadian boast of Aššurnaṣirpal over Bīt-Adini.284
These examples demonstrate that the pairing is common and widespread.

The Hebrew scriptures contain a large number of references to Yahweh's activity as a "devouring fire," Four passages from Isaiah 29-33 contain this description. The first is Isaiah 29:6, which reads:

mē’im yhwh ṣēbā’ōt tippāqed bōra’ām úbōra’aš wōqōl gādōl, sūpā
ūse’ārā wōlahab 'ēš 'ōkēlā.

By Yahweh of hosts you will be visited, with thunder and earthquake and great noise, whirlwind and tempest, and the flame of a devouring fire.

284 Cassin, Splendeur, 76. RIM A.0.101.1.iii.54
In this passage, fire is part of the cosmic eruption that accompanies the visitation of Yahweh. It appears in a sequence with other storm imagery, and describes lightning. In a reversal of the imagery of 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18, Yahweh reveals himself here amid storm imagery not to save his clients but rather to chastise them. In fact, Yahweh's arrival will make Jerusalem's former experiences of being under siege appear to be a pleasant dream by comparison.

Storm imagery also seems to lie behind the mention of 'ēš ʾōkālet in Isaiah 30:27 and the 'ēš ʾōkēlā in Isaiah 30:30. In the first passage, the name of Yahweh arrives amid images of fire and wrath:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hinnēh šēm-yhwh</th>
<th>bāʾ mimmerḥāq</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bōʾ ēr 'appō wəkōbed maššāʾ ā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šəpātāyw mālō ʿu zaʿ am</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ūlašōnō kāʾēš ʾōkālet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The name of Yahweh comes from far away,
burning with his anger, and heavy burden;
his lips are full of indignation,
and his tongue is like a devouring fire.

In the second, the wrath is accompanied by common storm motifs, including 'ēš ʾōkēlā:

| wəḥišmiʿa yhwh ʾet-hōd qōlō |
| wənəḥat zōrōʾ ţ yarʿēh |
| bəzaʿap ʾap wəlahab ʾēš ʾōkēlā |
| nepēš wāzerem wəʿeben bārād. |

Yahweh will cause his majestic voice to be heard
and the descending blow of his arm to be seen,
in furious anger, a flame of devouring fire,
a cloudburst and tempest and hailstones.

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285 For more on the divine name as a weapon and its use as a hypostasis, see T. Lewis, "'Athtartu's Incantations and the Use of Divine Names as Weapons," *JNES* 70/2 (2011): 207-227.
In these passages, Yahweh's arrival amidst storm imagery is for the salvation of Israel, not its chastisement.

Isaiah 33:14 shows a variant of this tradition. As a part of the larger theophany recorded in Isaiah 33:10-16, the 'ēš 'ōkēlā of Isaiah 33:14 is a metaphor for Yahweh's presence in Zion:

\[
pāḥādā bōṣiyôn haṭṭā'īm  
\text{ 'āhāz̄â r̄ādā hānēpîm}  
mī yāgūr lānū 'ēš 'ōkēlā  
mī-yāgūr lānū mōqēdē 'ōlām\]

The sinners in Zion are afraid; trembling has seized the godless:
"Who among us can sojourn with the devouring fire?  
"Who among us can sojourn with everlasting flames?"

As Blenkinsopp notes in his comments on this passage, this text is often taken to be an example of divine chastisement, similar to the chastisements mentioned in Isaiah 30:27, 30. Unlike the fiery storm motifs of Isaiah 30:27, 30, the fiery images here are drawn from the cult. The use of similar terms in Leviticus 6:2-3 (Eng 6:9-10) reveals that the fire of the mōqēd is the fire of the temple "hearth" that "devours" sacrifices. In Isaiah

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286 See Wildberger, *Isaiah 28-39*, 221, 281-282, 513-559 for a discussion of the setting, date, and composition of chapters 31 and 33. He acknowledges that Isaiah 33:14 could have been written as early as the time of Josiah and as late as the Hellenistic period, but that scholars tend to assign an earlier rather than later date (282).

287 The LXX of Isaiah 33:14b shows several departures from the Hebrew. The retroverted text reads:

\[
mī yaggîd lānū 'ēš 'ākēlā  
mī yaggîd lānū māqōm 'ōlām \]

"Who can tell us that fire devours  
Who can tell us of the eternal place?"

The confusion of yaggîd and yāgūr is complex, but not impossible. The interchange of the final consonants is rēš / dalet confusion, while the interchange of the internal matres is yōd-wāw confusion. Hatch & Redpath note (under the entry ἀναγέλλειν) that Isaiah 33:14 is a textual variant in the Hexapla. The confusion between māqōm and mōqēdē is likely due to the latter's rarity, attested only here, in Leviticus 6:2, and in Psalm 102:4, where even the MT shows evidence of scribal confusion.

33:14, this fiery hearth, normally a sign of Yahweh's holiness and presence, now becomes a force that threatens the haṭṭāʼîm, "sinners" and the hānēpîm, "godless."

According to the next lines (Isaiah 33:15-16), such a fiery judgment will extend to all Israel if they too fail to "walk righteously and speak uprightly."289

Wildberger argues that Isaiah 33:14b-16 was most likely drawn from a previously existing Tempeleinlassliturgien, a "gate liturgy," a genre also found in Psalm 15 and 24.290 In this earlier context, he proposes, the words of this rite would have been posed as a challenge to any worshipper desiring to approach the altar. In such a case, the ēš ʿōkēlā and the môqôdê ʿôlām did not represent a threat of punishment, as they do in Isaiah 33:14. Instead they described the sacrificial fire: worshippers approached the môqôdê ʿôlām so that their offering could be "devoured" by the ēš ʿōkēlā. The purity requirements of Isaiah 33:15-16 determined who could do so. It is unclear in this context how the fire might embody or mediate Yahweh's presence.

Wildberger's study of the meaning of the verb gār leads one to believe that the fire was not the locus of divine presence. Wildberger argues that gār here has the specific meaning to "dwell as a protected alien," usually as the result of a formal agreement.291 When one entered the Jerusalem temple, one entered as a protected alien sojourning in Yahweh's "country." To say that one could gār with the ēš ʿōkēlā and the môqôdê ʿôlām meant that one was fit to enter the temple precinct. Nothing in such a

289 Noted by Kaiser, Isaiah, 346-347; Oswalt, Isaiah, 599-600.
statement indicates that the 'ēš 'ökëlâ and the mòqødê 'òlâm were themselves the locus of
divine presence. The evidence favors treating these terms as a compound synecdoche for
the temple as a whole.

When this earlier ritual became part of an oracle of judgment, the symbolism of
the fire changed. What had been references to the temple fire now appear to refer to
Yahweh's appearance in the fiery theophany foretold in Isaiah 33:12-13. Whereas in the
original Tempeleinlassliturgien, the ability to găr with the 'ēš 'ökëlâ and the mòqødê
'òlâm indicated a fittingness to enter the temple precinct, in 33:14-16 those individuals
who can "sojourn" with the fire are those whose righteousness will deliver them from the
coming theophany of judgment. One cannot deny that the ease with which the author
linked this cultic text to a theophany hints at an identification of the cult fire with the
presence of Yahweh, but the evidence to draw such a conclusion is insufficient. In its
current form, the 'ēš 'ökëlâ and the mòqødê 'òlâm of Isaiah 33:14 are best understood as
fiery phenomena that appear during a theophany.

Two passages in Deuteronomy (4:24 and 9:6) identify Yahweh as the 'ēš 'ökälâ.
As in the passages from Isaiah, the 'ēš 'ökëlâ in Deuteronomy shows two interrelated
aspects. The phrase 'ēš 'ökëlâ describes Yahweh in a state of wrath in Deuteronomy
4:23-24, when Moses warns Israel not to make any forbidden image, because Yahweh is
a "devouring fire, a God of jealousy." Just as Deuteronomy refined the storm motif 'ēš to
make it the privileged description of Yahweh's presence, so Deuteronomy uses the 'ēš
'ökälâ as a unique indicator of Yahweh. In Isaiah 29:6, the 'ēš 'ökëlâ was just one of the
manifestations of Yahweh's arrival, but in Deuteronomy 4:23-24, the 'ēš 'ökëlâ is
Yahweh.292 The devouring fire is a metaphor for the ferocity of his passion. That passion will lead to destruction if Israel violates the covenant. If Israel remains faithful, that passion will turn outward to destroy Israel's enemies.

In Deuteronomy 9:6, Yahweh is an 'ēš ōkəlā, crossing before Israel to defeat the Anakim of Canaan.293 This reflects the 'ēš ōkēlā of Isaiah 30:27, 30, which accompanied Yahweh's destruction of Israel's Assyrian oppressors. In this case, it is not Yahweh's anthropomorphic "voice" and "arm" that are manifest among the 'ēš ōkēlā and other storm imagery, but rather it is Yahweh himself who is the 'ēš ōkəlā, attacking Israel's enemies so they may take possession of the land promised to their ancestors. Once again, the religious imagination behind Deuteronomy finds fire to be the most fitting indicator of Yahweh's presence.

To conclude, Isaiah knows of devouring fire as an image for Yahweh drawn from the storm-god tradition. He uses it to describe the fearsome power of Yahweh's protection and punishment. He also connects the storm-image to a cultic description of devouring fire to describe Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem. Deuteronomy also knows devouring fire as a description of Yahweh's power to protect and punish. In Deuteronomy, 'ēš ōkəlā is not a description or even a metaphor of Yahweh's power, but

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292 Weinfeld notes that this description is part of a Deuteronomic program that presents Yahweh as an "impassioned" deity. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1-11, 208.

293 Some translations render the phrase hû'-hā'ōbēr lopānēkā 'ēš ōkəlā as a simile and not an appositive. This includes the NRSV (... that the Lord, your God, is the one crosses over before you as a devouring fire"), the Einheitsübersetzung ("...dass der Herr, dein Gott, wie ein verzehrendes Feuer selbst vor dir hinüberzieht."), and the Bible de Jérusalem ("...c'est Yahvé ton Dieu qui va passer devant toi, comme un feu dévorant..."). Weinfeld argues strongly against this reading. None of the ancient versions take this phrase to be a simile. Although the nuances are different, in each case Yahweh is the devouring fire. Weinfeld, Deuteronomy 1-11, 400. Jacobson catalogs the translations and uses of this image among the Latin fathers and finds similar agreement. The fathers are unanimous that Yahweh is a consuming fire (Howard Jacobson, "God as Consuming Fire," Harvard Theological Review 98/2 [April 2005]: 219).
rather a description of Yahweh himself, evoking the fiery image from which Yahweh's qôl spoke to Israel.

The phrase 'ēš 'ōḱalâ appears in several strands of tradition in the Hebrew Bible, especially in descriptions of cultic fire (e.g., 1 Kings 18:38, which will be discussed in the following chapter, pgs. 136-137). Yahweh's "devouring" fiery presence can speak, destroy Israel's enemies, and consume sacrifices. Furthermore, the use of the idiom "devouring fire" gives an anthropomorphic nuance even when Deuteronomy uses the fiery divine embodiment to prohibit the production of anthropomorphic images of Yahweh. Devouring fire is the perfect symbol in Deuteronomy and elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures to unite Yahweh's power, appearance, and activity both in history and in the cult.

IV. Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate that fire is regularly associated with Yahweh's active presence. Lacking a clear anthropomorphic or theriomorphic iconography, the presence of Yahweh is often revealed through cosmic signs that resemble storm phenomena. Such phenomena often appear in Yahweh's company when his presence influences the outcome of the narrative. Storm theophanies are among the oldest Israelite images of Yahweh's protection of Israel. Cloud, precipitation, thunder, and celestial fire all reveal the presence of Yahweh at work in Israel and his mythic defeat of the forces of chaos. This is the image found in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18.

The author of Ezekiel introduced his own theophanic vision with a storm theophany, but then transitioned to Assyrian melammu imagery in his description of
Yahweh's appearance. In doing so, he united both Israelite and Assyrian images of
divine fire. Yahweh sits on a fiery wheeled throne and inhabits a body surrounded by
fire.

The giving of the covenant on Sinai is cataclysmically fiery. The JE description
(Exodus 19:18) compares the appearance of Yahweh to a kibšān, an industrial furnace.
The P version of the same events (Exodus 24:17) describes the kəbôd-yhwh like an 'ēš
'ōkelet on the mountain. Deuteronomy (4:11-12) emphasizes the awesome nature of the
fire (it burns 'ad-lēb haššāmayim) and describes it as the vehicle for Yahweh's speech in
the covenantal drama.

In the pillar of fire, Yahweh expresses his leadership of Israel during its journey
through the desert. The pillar represents Yahweh's localized presence. Although the
narrative associates it with a mal'āk (Exodus 14:19), Yahweh himself casts a glance from
the pillar that throws the Egyptian army into a panic (14:21). Although certain texts are
reticent to describe Yahweh's localized presence in a pillar or even generically in "fire" or
"cloud", several others do, and the tradition found in Nehemiah affirms the identification.

Finally, in Isaiah 33:14, the description of Yahweh as a devouring fire appears as
way to identify the deity's presence with the cultic fire on the altar in Jerusalem. In
Deuteronomy, meanwhile, the same phrase describes Yahweh's jealousy for and
protection of Israel. An old idiom became a new metaphor for a deity whose vigor had
become part of the history of Israel.

Each of these images describes Yahweh in action. Fire appears with or is the
primary manifestation of Yahweh's wrath, protection, leadership, spoken covenant,
movement, and cultic activity. Fire represents Yahweh's active presence both with and
without concomitant anthropomorphic imagery. It is important to point out that no
diachronic tradition of development presents itself here. Anthropomorphic images
combine with fire both in early literature (2 Samuel 22:9 and Psalm 18:9) and late
(Daniel 7:9-10). Fire is tied to storm imagery in early Iron Age material (2 Samuel 22:8-
16 and Psalm 18:8-16) and in material as late as the Persian period (Isaiah 66:14). One
gets a sense looking at these diverse texts that several authors, working at a remove from
each other in history and location, each knew of fire as an important symbol of Yahweh's
active presence. They employed it in ways that were both traditional and innovative.
CHAPTER 4
FIERY INTERMEDIARIES

I. Introduction

To paraphrase McCarter, ancient Israelite religious thinkers pondered the question, "How can a being who exists in the divine realm be active and available for worship in the human realm?" The last chapter investigated responses to that question that included storm theophanies, the $kôbôd\ yhwh$, and theophanies in fire. This chapter will investigate the role of fiery mediators, specifically weapons, chariots, and divine beings. In these passages, grammatical and narrative clues indicate that preternatural fire takes on the subjective role played by Yahweh himself in the narratives of the previous chapter. Such fire acts as something sent out from Yahweh, working at a distance from him but never counter to his will. It appears as a weapon of elemental power, a tool, a vehicle, or even a semi-divine being. The question that this chapter must address, then, is whether such active fire is a vivid metaphor for divine action, whether any of these images of preternatural fire are hypostases of the active divine presence.

Fire that "accompanies" Yahweh and fire "sent out" from Yahweh can appear together in the same narrative. In 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18, for example, fire comes out of Yahweh (v. 9) and appears in his company (v. 13). The same text also mentions a second kind of fire which flies forth from him as a weapon in the form of lightning (v. 15). The presence of both types of preternatural fire in this early text show that the one tradition does not give way to the other, but rather that the two traditions developed in

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tandem. In this early text, fire was both something that appeared in Yahweh's company and something Yahweh could send out to accomplish his will at a distance.

“Sent fire” falls into two categories: fire from Yahweh and materialization of fire. Fire from Yahweh includes divine weapons, or images of punishment or theophany. Materializations of fire, meanwhile, include images such as fiery objects and fiery beings. Overall, the images of fire in this chapter are more clearly distinct from Yahweh than the ones discussed in chapter 3.

II. The Radiant Divine Environment as a Source for "Sent Fire"

Fire sent out from Yahweh has its source in the fire that accompanies Yahweh.

Two important texts describe the environment around Yahweh with the word nōgah. Samuel 22 // Psalm 18 and Ezekiel 1 both use this term to describe the fiery radiance around Yahweh as a source of the fire that goes out from him.

2 Samuel 22:13-15

\[
\text{minnōgah negdō bā'ārū bārād wogahālē-'ēš} \quad \text{wayyar'em min-šāmāyim yhwh} \quad \text{wə'elyōn yittēn qōlē}\\
\]

295 Aside from the examples discussed in this chapter, see also the use of nōgah in Ezekiel 10:4 and Habakkuk 3:3-4.

296 This is McCarter's proposed reconstruction. MT 2 Samuel 22:13 reads:

\[
\text{minnōgah negdō bā'ārū gahālē-'ēš}
\]

The text of Psalm 18:13 reads:

\[
\text{minnōgah negdō 'ābāyw 'ābārū bārād wogahālē-'ēš}
\]

This presents a complicated textual crux. The retroverted LXX of 2 Samuel 22:13 follows the MT exactly. The retroverted LXX of Psalm 17:13 (MT 18:13) also follows the MT closely, only losing the masculine possessive pronoun at the end of 'ābāyw:

\[
\text{minnogah negdō 'ābīm 'ābārū, bārād wogahālē-'ēš}
\]

McCarter argues that in 2 Samuel 22:13, the phrase bārād wo- was lost due to homoiarchon with bā'ārū. Meanwhile, in Psalm 18, bā'ārū became 'ābārū through metathesis. The phrase 'ābāyw, he claims, is a corrupt duplicate of 'ābārū. Fiery hail also appears in Exodus 9:23 and is discussed on pg. 124. P. Kyle McCarter, II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Bible Commentary; Garden City, N.Y., 1984), 457.
Out of the brightness in front of him
flamed forth hail and coals of fire,
Yahweh thundered from heaven,
the most high gave forth his voice,
He loosed arrows, he scattered them
- lightning, he panicked (them).

In both cases, the nōgah is the source of fire that can work at a distance. 2 Samuel 22:9 also describes Yahweh's mouth as the source of such fire. In 2 Samuel 22:9, 13 // Psalm 18:9, 13, 14, the fire that goes forth from him takes the form of gahālē-ʾēš (coals of fire).

2 Samuel 22:15 // Psalm 18:15 also describe his arrows of lightning, another type of "sent fire" that comes from Yahweh's radiant environment.

Nōgah is a similar source of “sent fire” in Ezekiel 1:13:

údōmūt haḥayyōt marʾēhām kōgahālē-ʾēš bōʾārōt kāmarʾēh hallappidīm hīʾ mithalleket bēn haḥayyōt wōnōgah lāʾēš ūmin-hāʾēš yōsēʾ bārāq

The form of the living creatures was something that looked like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches. This was flashing among the living creatures,
and there was a brightness to the fire, and lightning came out of the fire.

The fire exhibited nōgah and lightning came out of it. The purpose of using these three texts is to show that the authors of these passages imagined Yahweh's environment to be radiant, and that this radiant environment was thought to be the source of the fire or lightning that worked Yahweh's will at a distance.

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297 Psalm 18:14 reads: wayyarʾēm baššāmayim yhwh / wōʾelyōn yittēn qōlō / bārād wōgahālē-ʾēš, the last line being a duplication of the final line of Psalm 18:13.

298 4QSama reads wayāḥom. Psalm 18:15 reads wayyišlah ḥiṣṣāyw wayōpišēm / ūbōrāqîm rāb wayōhummēm.
In fact, these texts were written several centuries apart, and in different historical contexts; different religious imagininations were at work.\textsuperscript{299} In spite of this, they reveal the idea that Yahweh's environment of fire was the source of the fire that went forth from him. Lightning, hail, coals, and other forms of “sent fire” come out of the divine brilliance and accomplished his will at a distance. In these texts, one gets the impression that Yahweh's fiery brilliance may have taken on a distinct identity of its own and gone forth to accomplish his will.

III. Elemental Fire

Many descriptions of “sent fire” give no form or description to the preternatural fire. It is simply an elemental force that Yahweh sends out, usually to punish, but sometimes as a means manifesting his power and inspiring worship. When such language describes "sent fire," it indicates that the fire works at a remove from Yahweh, acting on the deity's behalf.

A. Amos 1-2

An eighth century BCE description of “sent fire” comes in the first two chapters of the book of the prophet Amos. The prophet announces fiery doom on Damascus, several Philistine cities, Tyre, Ammon, Moab, and Judah. With each oracle (apart from Amos 1:14), the prophet reports Yahweh's promise "I will send fire" (šillaḥtî ʾēš), on the doomed nations.

\begin{verbatim}
1:4  wāšillaḥtî ʾēš bəbêt ḥāzāʾēl        I will send fire on the house of Hazael
\end{verbatim}

and it will consume the strongholds of Ben Hadad;
1:7 \(\text{wə́šillahtí 'ēš bəhōmat 'azzā́, wə́'ākəlā́ 'ərmənōṭêhā} \) I will send fire on the wall of Gaza and it will consume its strongholds;
1:10 \(\text{wə́šillahtí 'ēš bəhōmat šör wə́'ākəlā́ 'ərmənōṭêhā} \) I will send fire on the wall of Tyre and it will consume its strongholds;
1:12 \(\text{wə́šillahtí 'ēš bətēmān wə́'ākəlā́ 'ərmənōt boṣrā́} \) I will send fire on Teman and it will consume the strongholds of Bozrah;
1:14 \(\text{wə́hiṣsatī́ 'ēš bəhōmat rabbā́ wə́'ākəlā́ 'ərmənōṭêhā} \) I will kindle a fire on the wall of Rabbah and it will consume its strongholds;
2:2 \(\text{wə́šillahtī́- 'ēš bəmṓ'āb wə́'ākəlā́ 'ərmənōt haqqə̀riyyôt} \) I will send fire on Moab and it will consume the strongholds of Kerioth;
2:5 \(\text{wə́šillahtī́- 'ēš bhihūdā́ wə́'ākəlā́ 'ərmənōt yə́rūšālāim} \) I will send fire on Judah and it will consume the strongholds of Jerusalem.

Two things about the fire are ambiguous. First, the fire has no explicit form. As the studies in this chapter will show, destructive fire often takes a certain form, like lightning, rain, or fiery hail.\(^{301}\) Second, the originating point of the fire is also ambiguous. The fire does not come from heaven, the way other destructive fire does (2 Kings 1:9-12). Yahweh delivers this oracle from Zion (Amos 1:2), but Jerusalem is not said to be the source of the fire. It is, in fact one of the targets. The oracle against Jerusalem gives no indication that the fire will come from its midst.\(^{302}\) Thus it is unclear in the text whence Yahweh will send this fire.

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\(^{300}\) See Jeremiah 49:27b for parallel.

\(^{301}\) See below, p. 14, for a discussion of fiery and icy hail.

\(^{302}\) See Shalom Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 20-24, for a discussion of the originality of the oracle against Judah. Amos 2:5 disrupts the sevenfold structure of the prophecy and contains Deuteronomistic language that would be more at home in a period later than the life of Amos. Andersen and Freedman argue that the oracle belongs to the original passage. It is part of the geopolitical scene, and can hardly be left out of a list of Israel's neighbors. The apparent Deuteronomistic language in the text does not by itself make the passage a later addition; such language may have been in use long before its inclusion in biblical traditions (Francis I. Andersen and D. N.
The fire is directed against the strongholds and walls of enemy cities. Weiser understood these to be prophecies of an Assyrian invasion, calling the “sent fire” of Amos 1-2 a Kriegsbrand.303 That Amos would associate fire with Assyrian invasion is not unexpected; as Elena Cassin noted, fire was important to Assyrian military tactics.304 Shalom Paul draws on Numbers 21:27-30 to show a long history of fire's use in war oracles, a point he also illustrates with descriptions of military fire from the wider ancient Near East.305 Fire's use in military operations is well documented.306 Thus, these authors claim, the fire in these oracles is a symbol for a military invasion.

Others think this fire is theophanic. Wolff understands the punishment to be less military than judicial; he gives several examples of fiery punishments promised to those

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303 Artur Weiser Das Buch der zwölf Kleinen Propheten (2 vols., Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1949), 1:118


306 Daniel Ussishkin has studied the significance of fire in the Lachish reliefs at Nineveh and at the site itself. He notes in the Lachish reliefs the Judean defenders' use of burning chariots to destroy Assyrian siege-operations [D. Ussishkin, The Renewed Archaeological Excavations at Lachish 1973-1994 (Tel Aviv: Emery and Claire Yass, 2004) 736, illustration 733]. The archaeological remains, however, indicate that the city was only fired after it was depopulated and looted. Aššurnaṣirpal's boast implies the same thing; the use of fire comes after the conquest. Such postbellum firing was probably both a demoralizing tactic and a guarantee that the city would not be soon repopulated [D. Ussishkin, The Conquest of Lachish by Šennacherib (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1982), 54].

The ongoing dig at Ashkelon indicates that the Babylonians employed fire differently (Lawrence Stager and Daniel Master, Ashkelon 3: The Seventh Century BC [Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns 2011], pages listed in the following discussion). The debris in every area of the tel showed signs of burning, indicating a catastrophic city-wide fire (13). In the winery (buildings 7 and 776), one finds uniformly burnt debris and vitrified brick. Building 776 revealed loom weights fused by high temperatures in room 801 (19), fired bricks and still-plastered charred beams in room 460, layer 464 (23), vitrified orange destruction debris in room 210 layers, 207 and 230 (24), a concentration of black ash in room 299, layer 296, and in the same room, layer 252 more burnt brick (26). Unlike the Assyrian destruction of Lachish, the destruction layer at Ashkelon includes human remains (41), valuables (397-440) and food (591-613), indicating that the city was destroyed before it was depopulated and looted.
who broke treaties. Wolff believes that this prophecy is not a promise of historical military action but rather of a theophany, with fire serving as a divine weapon. He cites 1 Kings 18:38 and Leviticus 10:2 to demonstrate that fire is a weapon in Yahweh's arsenal. In addition to the Assyrian attack, Paul thinks that this oracle also foretells a military theophany. He draws on the works of Miller and Weinfeld to demonstrate that fire is a regular motif in narratives of divine warfare, and that such divine warfare accompanies human military activity (cf. Joshua 10:11).

Andersen and Freedman claim that the fire Yahweh sends out here is actually a mythic being. They note the mix of historical and mythic language in these passages, but they argue for a distinction in the description of the action: the expression šillaḥtī ḫēš, "I will send fire" is particular to divine activity; when humans use fire as a weapon they burn something bā’ēš, "in fire (Deuteronomy 13:16, Joshua 11:11, Judges 4:15)." They compare the šillaḥtī ḫēš of Amos 1-2 with the šillaḥtī bākem deber of Amos 4:10 and the mythic nāḥāš and hereb of Amos 9:3-4. The fire that Yahweh sends here is not the Assyrian army, as other exegetes have concluded, but rather a mythic being with the

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power to can destroy all of Moab (Amos 2:1-3) or consume the *tôhôm* in Amos 7:4.312

Such a being is comparable to the destroying angels in 2 Samuel 24:15-17 and 2 Kings 19:35, the *šorāpîm* in Deuteronomy 8:15, Numbers 21:6, and Isaiah 14:29, 30:6, the *deber* of Habakkuk 3:5, and the Nušku, Erra, and Ištum of other ancient Near Eastern religions.313

Andersen and Freedman's argument for a being of fire is tempting to follow. In fact, the feminine verb, *'ākəlā*, makes it clear that the fire is the active force in this narrative. This was not the case in 2 Samuel 22:13-15 // Psalm 18:13-15. In those passages, the effects of the fire, namely scattering (*yəpîšēm*) and panic (*yāhôm*), are attributed to Yahweh with masculine verbs. In Amos, the feminine *'ākəlā* shows that the fire take the primary role.

It would be helpful to this thesis to find in Amos a fully developed being of fire, sent out to act on Yahweh's behalf, but too much of Andersen's and Freedman's argument rests on facts external to the book of Amos. Without the examples of Nušku, Erra, and Ištum it would be difficult from internal evidence to find a "being of fire" in Amos' text. Their internal evidence, that the repeated phrase *šillaḥtî* 'ēš in Amos 1-2 is similar to the phrase *šillaḥtî* *deber* in Amos 4:10, is subverted by the fact that Yahweh himself claims credit for the acts of destruction listed in Amos 4:10. The word *deber* there, although it might have a mythic history, does not clearly describe a mythic being in this passage, and cannot support an argument for a mythic being in Amos 1-2. Their other support, that the *šillaḥtî* 'ēš in Amos 1-2 is similar to Yahweh's dispatching of the and *nāḥāš* and *ḥereb* of


313 For Andersen's and Freedman's comments such beings, see Andersen and Freedman, *Amos*, 239 (destroying angels), 365 (*šorāpîm*), 442 (*deber*), 239 (*nāḥāš* and *ḥereb*).
Amos 9:3-4, also does not hold up to scrutiny. In Amos 9:3-4, Yahweh commands (ʼāṣawweh) them to go forth. One cannot claim, then, that Amos 1-2 speaks of a divine being of fire.

It is more likely that the fire in Amos 1-2 is some sort of a divine weapon. In Amos 2:8b, Yahweh declares, hāšibōti yādi ʼal-ʼeqrôn, "I will turn my hand against Ekron". Although this could mean, "I will turn my power against Ekron," it could also indicate that Yahweh releases his punishing fire from his hand. Miller argues that such passages describe a weapon of fire similar to a spear or javelin.314 Although no such weapon is explicitly named, Paul argues that fire and theophany are common motifs in narratives of holy war.315 He compares Yahweh's punishing fire in Amos to several iconographic depictions of storm-weapons in Near Eastern iconography.316 The prophecy here, Paul argues, is not one of military annihilation but rather a fiery theophanic punishment.317 Israel's enemies will be visited by Yahweh, who will use a fiery weapon against them.318


tirtaqiš bādi ba’li
kāma našri bi- ʻushbu ʻāti-hu

Dance in the hand of Ba’lu
Like an eagle in his fingers.
Such a "lightning mace" or "lightning spear" is not the weapon one usually finds with Yahweh. Narratives in the Hebrew scriptures most often describe Yahweh's fiery weapons as arrows. Several passages (2 Sam 22:15 // Psalm 18:15, Psalms 76:4, 77:18, and 144:6, Habakkuk 3:9-11) all mention Yahweh's arrows, and specifically compare them to lightning. If Lewis and Steiner are correct, the crux in Deuteronomy 33:2 may also contain an image of arrows or a spear of fire of lightning coming forth from Yahweh's right hand. Divine archers also appear in other ancient Near Eastern imagery, like the boast of the Hittite king Muršili:

As I marched and arrived at the Lawasa Mountains, the mighty stormgod, my lord, showed his 'divine power' and shot a 'thunderbolt'. My army saw the 'thunder-bolt' and the land of Arzawa saw it and the 'thunderbolt' went and struck the land of Arzawa...

In spite of this widespread imagery, Amos 1-2 does not contain any explicit description of the form of or the vehicle for the fire. Yahweh simply states "I will send..."

Looking at other associations of Ba'lu's weapons and storm motifs, Gaster concludes that Ba'lu's divine maces are mythologized thunderbolts. For example, in KTU 1.4 v:8-9, Ba'lu "releases" lightning to the earth, (šaraḫa . le 'arši . baraqûma), language that suits an archery motif. Gaster also makes comparisons to parallels that scholars today would likely find too wide-ranging. He notes the similarities between Ba'lu's two clubs and the paired divine maces of Ninurta, ŠÁR.GAZ and ŠÁR.UR (world-crusher and world-pounder), the Babylonian arpu and meḫu (storm cloud and tempest), Marduk's mummu and abūbu (lance and tempest), the Vedic thunderbolt of Indra, and the thunder and lightning Zeus hurled against Typhon (Hesiod, Theogony, 853; cf. lightning as Zeus' javelin in Theogony, 689-694). See Theodor Herzl Gaster, Thespis: Ritual, Myth, and Drama in the Ancient Near East (New York Schuman, 1950), 156-158. More recently, Lewis argues that the power of Ba'lu's clubs came not from fire, but from incantatory magic. Theodore J. Lewis, "'Ahtartu's Incantations and the Use of Divine Names as Weapons," JNES 70/2 (2011): 213-214.


320 Weinfeld offers the Hittite handandatar, noting its equivalence to Sumarian NĬG.SI.SÁ, Akkadian mšarum, and Hebrew šāḏaqā ("Divine Intervention," 139 n. 93).

321 Weinfeld's rendering of ḫalmišanîš, a Hittite word for thunderbolt that also means blazing tinder ("Divine Intervention," 139 n. 94).

fire." The tradition of fire used in human and divine warfare certainly suggests that the fire here was a divine weapon, but these passages from Amos lack any details of the fire's characteristics that would allow them to fit into a wider tradition of weaponry. The fire of Amos 1-2, therefore, is best understood as an elemental power, used by Yahweh as a weapon to punish on his behalf.

B. Amos 7:4

A reference to preternatural fire lies in the crux of Amos 7:4. The presence of a major crux makes it difficult to understand the form the fire actually takes.

$kōh \ hir'\ anî \ ʿādōnāy \ yhwh \ wəhinnēh \ qōrē' \ lārīb \ bā' \ ĕš \ ʿādōnāy \ yhwh \ wattō'kal \ ʾet-tōhōm \ rabbā \ wə' \ ʾākəlā \ ʾet-haḥēleg.$

Thus the Lord Yahweh showed me: The Lord Yahweh was calling for a contending in fire; it consumed the great Abyss, and it will consume the portion.

The Hebrew is unclear. The preposition $bə$ usually precedes the name of the accused party, (e.g. MT Hosea 2:4 $rībū \ bə' \ imməkem$ "$contend (or plead) with your mother"). In Amos 7:4, the preposition $bə$ instead precedes the means of contention ("by fire").

Ancient versions all read $rīb$, but vary widely in their attempts at making sense of the line.

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324 Targum Jonathan: $wāḥā' \ 'aṭid \ līmdān \ ba' \ ʾīṣṣātā' \ (He was ready to judge by fire). Göttingen LXX: $iōdū \ ἐκάλεσε\ τὴν \ δίκην \ ἐν \ πυρί \ "He summoned a judgment in fire." The Vulgate: $ecce \ vocabat \ iudicium \ ad \ ignem$, "He was summoning a judgment unto fire." The LXX shows only one variant reading of the passage under consideration. In the 11th century Bologna catena [MS 239], the text reads: $iōdū \ ἐκάλεσε\ τὴν$
Perhaps because the ancient versions show such variation, and perhaps because
the Hebrew seems, as Morgenstern says, "impossible," a number of modern biblical
scholars have attempted text-critical solutions to Amos 7:4. Morgenstern catalogs
twelve different scholarly proposals, including his own. Among the readings that
Morgenstern relates is Hendrik Elhorst's:

\[
\text{wəhiṉnēh qôrê' lāhābet ĕš}
\]

"He was calling for a flame of fire." This is the reading that appears in the JPS and BHS notes. Morgenstern dismissed this as an improbably complex textual corruption, but was not able to offer a simpler one. In 1964, Delbert Hillers revived the reading originally offered by Max Krenkel in 1866:

\[
\text{wəhiṉnēh qôrê' lirbīb ĕš}
\]

"He was calling for a rain of fire." At the time of Krenkel's writing, the argument against his proposal was that \text{rbb} was \textit{plurale tantum} in Hebrew, always appearing as \text{rəbîbîm}. The discovery and decipherment of Ugaritic texts revealed several instances of the word \text{rbb} in the singular.

Thus, if \text{rəbīb-ēš} were the original reading of Amos 7:4, a simple mis-division of words could account for \text{rīb bā ĕš}. Biblical rains of fire appear in Genesis 19:24 and Ezekiel 38:22. It would be a fitting weapon against the monster \text{təhōm} and for the

\[
\text{διαθήκευς ἐν πυρί}
\]

"He was calling for a covenant in fire." This reading, not attested elsewhere, is likely an inadvertent scribal expansion of \text{δίκευς} into \text{διαθήκευς}.

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325 Morgenstern, \textit{Amos Studies}, 59.

326 Henrik J. Elhorst, \textit{De profetie van Amos} (Leiden: Brill, 1900). Discussed in Morgenstern 1941, 60 n. 75. The JPS notes and the BHS \textit{probabiliter} reading both rely on Elhorst's reconstruction.


328 The word appears in KTU 1.19 I 44, in a parallel to \text{ṭal}, in KTU 1.3 IV 44 and in KTU 1.3 II 39, also in a parallel to \text{ṭal}, and in KTU 1.4 I 17, where it is part of the title of the goddess \text{Tly}. 
expression of the divine wrath. Many ancient Near Eastern parallels exist in which deities destroy monsters with fire from heaven, and thus Hillers finds ḫēlep ʾēš a fitting image here.

Of the major modern commentators, Wolff follows Hillers (ein Feuerregen) with enthusiasm, Andersen and Freedman do so with hesitation, and Paul argues for the integrity of the MT. Although scholars may never completely agree on the reading, it is clear enough to say that the fire in Amos 7:4 is an elemental weapon that once consumed ʾəhôm rabbâ and is now coming against the divine ḫēlep, Israel.

C. Genesis 19:24: The Destruction of Sodom

wayhwîh himṭîr ʾal-sôdôm wəʾal-ʾəmôrâ goprit wāʾēš mēʾēt yhwh min-haššâmâyîm wayyəhâpôk ’et-heʾārim hâʾēl wəʾēt kol-hakkikkâr wəʾēt kol-yoḥâbê heʾārim wəṣemâh haʾādâmâ

Then Yahweh rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and the fire from Yahweh out of heaven. He overturned those cities and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and the growth of the soil.

In this text, Yahweh's punishment appears as a rain of sulfur and fire out of heaven. A rain of fire appears in the prism of Ashurbanipal, which describes the fall of divine fire (dGIŠ.BAR). The Exaltation of Inanna describes the goddess as IZI BAR7-BAR7-RA KALAM-E ŠE벼ב-זא (raining burning fire on the land). Such a rain of fire also appears in Ezekiel 38:22, where the fire and sulfur accompany other storm motifs,


332 Weinfeld mentions this passage ("Divine Intervention," 140), but does not give the text. Exaltation of Inanna (Inanna B) 13. ETCSL 4.07.2. etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk
including gešem šōṭēp (torrential rain), and ēlgābīš (hail), along with war motifs like dever (pestilence) and dām (blood). In Genesis 19:24, however, the rain of fire and sulfur becomes the primary weapon with which Yahweh punishes the cities on the plain.

In this J source text, fire as a weapon from heaven evokes both the images of Amos 1-2 and also the Noah traditions. 333

Westermann notes the repetition of the divine name in the second half of the line (wāʾēš mēʾēt yhwh min-ḥaššāmāyim) calling it "der unschönen Wiederholung." He believes that it is evidence of two textual traditions coming together in one narrative. 334

What is clear, however, from the gender of the verb yahāpōk, however, is that it is Yahweh, and not the ēš, that is accomplishing the overthrow. This is different from the passages in Amos, in which the verbs attributed the destruction to the ēš. In Genesis 19:24, the best understanding is that fire is a divine weapon. This passage is similar to Amos 1-2 in that the fire is an elemental punishing force. It is different in that it attributes the destruction to Yahweh and not to the fire itself.

D. Exodus 9:23-24

Fiery hail is portrayed as a divine weapon in Exodus 9:23-24:

wayyēt mōšēh 'et-mattēhū 'al-ḥaššāmāyim wayhwh nātan qōlōt ūbārād wattihālak ēš 'āršā wayyamṭēr yhwh bārād 'al-ereš miṣrāyim waywēhī bārād waʾēš mitlaqqaḥat botōk habbārād kābēd mōʾōd 'āšer lōʾ-ḥāyā kāmōhū bokol-ereš miṣrayim mēʾāz hayōtā lōgōy.


Moses stretched out his staff to the sky and Yahweh gave forth thunder and hail, and fire went toward the earth. Yahweh rained hail onto the land of Egypt. There was hail, with fire flashing in the hail. There had never been heavier hail in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

Commentators say little about the fiery hail. Fensham notes the use of icy hail among other storm images as a form of divine punishment in the Sefire treaty and Isaiah 30:30, but he makes no distinction between icy and fiery hail.\(^\text{335}\) Fiery hail is also attested in 2 Samuel 18:13-14 // Psalm 18:13-14, which speak of a hail and coals of fire in parallel, and gives the nōgah (brightness) before Yahweh as their common source.

Exodus 9:23-24 indicates the divine element of the fiery hail in two ways. First, the fire is mitlaqqaḥat. This rare word indicates that the fire-filled hail is a flashing or coruscating phenomenon that can move on its own. Second, Yahweh does not send (nātan) the fire like he does the hail or the thunder, but rather it goes of its own accord (tihālak). Similar verbs describing self-propelled motion appear in the plagues only for living things like the frogs (8:2 taʿal and tōkas) and the flies (8:20 yāboʾ). These clues give the impression that the fire in this passage is not a meteorological event but a self-propelled supernatural force. The fire is within the hailstones, to which the destruction of the plague is attributed. The ʾēš mitlaqqaḥat indicates that something about the hail was supernatural, and that the damage it did was both beyond expectations and attributable to divine action. The composer of Psalm 78, referring to the fiery quality of the hail, describes it with the word rōšāpīm, strengthens supernatural identification of the fire by associating it with the deity Resheph. The addition of the description ʾēš mitlaqqaḥat indicates that the bārād is not natural precipitation, but a preternatural action. Thus

\(^{335}\) Charles Fensham, "Common Trends in Curses of the Near Eastern Treaties and Kudurru-Inscriptions Compared with Maledictions of Amos and Isaiah," *ZAW* 75/2 (1963):169. ProQuest has this incorrectly catalogued as volume 34. In a private communication, Theodore Lewis suggested that "fiery hail" might be the description of a meteor shower.
Exodus 9:23-24 contains another reference to fire accomplishing the divine will at a distance.

**E. Elijah**

Several instances of "sent fire" appear in the Elijah and Elisha narratives (1 Kings 17 - 2 Kings 13:20). These are the 'ēš-yhwh that consumes the sacrifice at Carmel (1 Kings 18:38), the fire that Elijah witnesses at Horeb (1 Kings 19:12), the fire that consumes the two bands of troops sent to summon Elijah (2 Kings 1:9-12), the chariot that carries Elijah into heaven (2 Kings 2:11-12), and the chariots of fire that Elisha reveals to his attendant at Dothan (2 Kings 6:17). In each of these instances, the fire works at a distance from Yahweh.

The dating of these narratives remains a vexing question. As they appear now, these narratives are part of the Deuteronomistic History, which itself is product of the late seventh century BCE and likely continued to be edited until the late sixth century BCE. The search for embedded sources is difficult. In general terms, most scholars posit some

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The following scholars argue for a sixth century date or even later for this material: G. Fohrer, _Elia_ (2nd ed. Zürich: Zwingli, 1968). Steven L. McKenzie, _The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History_ (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 42; Leiden: Brill, 1991): 81-100. Thomas Römer, _The So-Called Deuteronomistic History_ (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 98 n. 50. Römer, however, acknowledges the possibility that stories of Elijah and Elisha may have circulated as early as the 8th century (154 n. 109).

337 Following Römer, _So-Called_, 154.
independent circulation of the Elijah and Elisha narratives before their incorporation into the Deuteronomistic History, but the exact details of this are a matter of much debate.\textsuperscript{338}

It is enough, for the purposes of this study, which is to categorize images of preternatural fire and determine whether or not they are hypostatic, to treat the Elijah/Elisha material as a part of the Deuteronomistic Historian's program, and to take them as late seventh century BCE texts.

1. 1 Kings 18:38

The climax of Elijah's contest with the priests of Ba’al contains a vivid scene of preternatural fire:

\textit{wattippōl ‘ēš-yhwh wattō’kal ‘et-hā’ōlā wə’et-hā’ēšim wə’et-hā’ābānim wə’et-he’āpār wə’et-hammayim ‘ašer-battā’ālā liḥēkā}\textsuperscript{339}

The fire of Yahweh fell and consumed the offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

This narrative contains several noteworthy features. First, the subject of this verse is not Yahweh but rather ‘ēš-yhwh, Fire-of-Yahweh, which fell (tippōl), consumed (tō’kal), and licked (liḥēkā). It is the fire that acts, not Yahweh. As in Amos 1-2, the verbs are all feminine, and describe the action of the ‘ēš-yhwh. Compare the language here to that of Exodus 19:18, discussed in chapter 3.

\textsuperscript{338} See note 336. Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18 violates the Deuteronomistic principle that legitimate Yahwistic worship should take place only in the Jerusalem temple.

\textsuperscript{339} Retroverted LXX has wattippōl ‘ēš mē’ēt yhwh min haššāmayim wattō’kal ‘et-hā’ōlā wə’et-hā’ēšim wə’et-hammayim ‘ašer-battō’ālā wə’et-he’āpār liḥēkā hā’ēš. In his analysis of 1 Kings 18, Andrew Davis, who argues for the priority of the LXX, notes the consistent Deuteronomistic editing of the MT narrative. In the LXX, the stones of the altar remain standing after the conflagration, having only been "licked" by the fire. In the MT, the stones are consumed with the ‘ōlā; Elijah's elicit altar is completely destroyed. Andrew Davis, "Tel Dan in its Northern Cultic Context," (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2010), 209-212.
Mount Sinai was entirely smoking because Yahweh had come down on it in fire, and its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace, and the entire mountain was shaking very much. The sound of the trumpet increased in strength. Moses spoke and God answered him in thunder.

The language of Exodus 19:18 is clear: Yahweh is the actor in the narrative. 1 Kings 18:38, by contrast, does not make a clear distinction between the 'ēš-yhwh and Yahweh himself, for although the actor in 1 Kings 18:38 is the 'ēš-yhwh, in 1 Kings 18:39, the people see the fire and fall on their faces in worship, presumably toward the direction of the fire they had witnessed. Their response, yhwh hû hāʾēlōhim! yhwh hû hāʾēlōhim! indicates that they were not worshipping the 'ēš-yhwh, but rather the deity whose fire it was. Note that the text never states that Yahweh sends the fire; it simply falls (from the sky, in the LXX). Yahweh's activity in this passage, although implied, is communicated only through the mediation of the fire.

The 'ēš-yhwh here does not embody Yahweh, but acts as his representative. The fire's purpose is to receive the sacrifice, demonstrate divine power, and to elicit a statement of faith from the witnesses. This is a cultic role, unlike the fires of punishment seen in Amos or Genesis 19. Cogan compares this passage with other "altar inaugurations," among them Leviticus 9:24, which will be studied in greater detail in the next chapter (see pgs. 181-183), and to which one should also add Judges 6:21 (see pgs. 173-174). The fire in these other passages does not embody a localized divine

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340 Retroverted LXX has wayyeḥērad kol-hāʾām for wayyeḥērad kol-hāhār. This is likely due to confusion with Exodus 19:16, which reads wayyeḥērad kol-hāʿām.
presence, but rather serves as a sign to indicate his nearby presence. This is not like the fire in Deuteronomy 4:12, from the midst of which Yahweh could speak. In 1 Kings 18:38, Yahweh is not in the fire.

2. 1 Kings 19:11-12

Such a conclusion, then, sheds some light on the connection of fire and Yahweh discussed in the very next chapter, 1 Kings 19:11-12.

He said, rise up and stand on the mountain before Yahweh: Yahweh is passing by. There was a great wind, so powerful it was splitting the mountains and shattering the rocks before Yahweh, but Yahweh was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but Yahweh was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but Yahweh was not in the fire. And after the fire, a voice of a small whisper.

A close reading of 1 Kings 18:38 revealed that Yahweh was not, in fact, in the fire. In 1 Kings 19:11-12, that fact is explicitly stated. In this passage, wind, earthquake, and fire are each rejected as manifestations of Yahweh. Each of these phenomena, in fact, appear elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible as signs of Yahweh's presence (Exodus 19:16-19; 20:18; Judges 5:4-5; 2 Samuel 22:8-15 // Psalm 18:8-15 [Eng 18:7-14; 68:9; Habakkuk 3:3-6), and are also well represented in the theophanies of non-Israelite deities.342 At first

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341 Mordechai Cogan, 1 Kings, (Anchor Bible Commentary 10; New Haven: Yale, 2001), 443, notes the way that fire symbolizes the divine presence (Exodus 3:2, 19:18 24:17), appears at other altar inaugurations (Leviticus 9:24; 2 Chronicles 7:3), and attests divine approval (1 Chronicles 21:26). He also believes that it here also reveals Yahweh's power.

342 Jörg Jeremias, Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer Altestamentlichen Gattung (WMANT 10; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), 88-90. See especially point a, e, f, g, h, i, j, and k for comparisons between text from the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern sources.
glance, the wind, earthquake, and fire seem to play the role of Yahweh's divine attendants who march with him into battle (for more on this, see below, pgs. 160-163). The writer of 1 Kings 19 appears to reject this. The message in 1 Kings 19:11-12 likely had a double emphasis. First, Yahweh did not appear in the same manner as non-Israelite storm deities. Second, one cannot associate wind, earthquake, and fire, with even an attenuated Yahwistic presence. Yahweh was not in them. One suspects that this polemic came as a response to ancient worship of these phenomena as manifestations or intermediaries of Yahweh, or perhaps instead as evidence that was simply the Israelite version of storm deities elsewhere called Ba’l or Ḥaddu. The author of 1 Kings 19, when considering perceptible phenomena with which to localize Yahweh, chose one dependent on hearing, specifically the qôl, "voice." Such a choice is strongly reminiscent of Moses’ statement in Deuteronomy 4:12: qôl dəvārîm ʾattem šômâʾîm ùtûmûnâʾ enâkem rōʿîm zûlātî qôl, "you heard the sound of words, but a form you did not see; (there was) only a voice." Such a choice allowed the author to present Yahweh's intervention in human affairs without imagery that threatened Yahweh's unique role in Israel or allowed for syncretism.

This passage also brings to mind one of Aster's conclusions. The three phenomena mentioned here, wind, earthquake, and fire, are each intangible yet perceptible events.

343 A fact discussed extensively by Cogan, 1 Kings, 453. Similar passages appear in Judges 5:4-5, Habakkuk 3:3-6, Psalm 18:8-10, 68:9, 104:4; and Exodus 19:16-18, 20:18. A similar image appears in the discussion of Psalm 50:3 and 97:3 below.

344 F.M. Cross nuances this even further, noting that the word qôl also has the meaning "thunder," and that the expression qôl baʾl meant both "thunder" and "the voice of Baʾl." The careful way the author of 1 Kings 19 emphasizes that the voice was qôl domâmā daqqā, "the sound of a small whisper," is part of the "anti-stormgod" polemic. Even Yahweh's qôl was distinct from natural phenomena and from the voices of other deities. Frank Moore Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 194.
Fire, especially, provides the perceptible phenomenon by which the divine kābōd is recognized.\textsuperscript{346} Aster notes the very careful way that P texts separate the Presence from the phenomena of the kābōd. The text of 1 Kings 19, although from the Deuteronomistic tradition, essentially makes the same distinction. The fire might have been part of the phenomenon of Yahweh's presence and it might act on Yahweh's behalf, but "Yahweh was not in the fire."

3.) 2 Kings 1:9-15

The narrative of 2 Kings 1:9-15 describes three attempts on the part of Israelite troops to bring Elijah before the king. The first two are foiled when fire comes from heaven to consume the kings officers. Only the third, polite and pious captain, succeeds in his duty.

\texttt{wayyišlah 'ēlāyw ṣār-ḥāmiššîm waḥamiššāyw wayya'al 'ēlāyw wəhinnēh yōšēb 'al-rō's hāḥār waydabbēr 'ēlāyw 'iš hā 'ēlōhim hammelek dibber rēdā wayya'anē 'ēlīyahu waydabbēr 'ēl-ṣar ḥaḥamiššîm wa'im-'iš 'ēlōhim 'āni tēred 'ēš min-ḥaṭṭāmayim wətō'kal 'ōtōkā wəḥamiššēka wattrēd 'ēš min-ḥaṭṭāmayim wətō'kal 'ōtō wəḥamiššāyw wayyāsōb wayyišlah 'ēlāyw ṣar-ḥāmiššîm 'aḥēr wəḥamiššāyw wayya'al waydabbēr 'ēlāyw 'iš hā 'ēlōhim kōh-āmar hammelek məhērā rēdā wayya'an 'ēlīyā waydabbēr 'ālēhem 'im 'išhā 'ēlōhim 'āni tēred 'ēš min-ḥaṭṭāmayim wətō'kal 'ōtōkā we'et wəḥamiššēka wattrēd 'ēš- 'ēlōhim min-ḥaṭṭāmayim wətō'kal 'ōtō wəḥamiššāyw wayyāsōb wayyišlah ṣar-ḥāmiššîm šōlišîm waḥamiššāyw wayya'al wayyābō 'ṣar-ḥāmiššîm haššēliši wayyākra 'al-birkāy wəneged 'ēlīyāhu wayyithannēn 'ēlāyw waydabbēr 'ēlāyw 'iš hā 'ēlōhim tīqad-nā' napši wənepes 'ābādēkā 'ēlleh ḥāmiššîm bo'ēnēkā hinēh yārōdā 'ēš min-ḥaṭṭāmayim wattrēkā 'ēl-šēnē šārē ḥaḥamiššîm hāri 'šōnim we'et-ḥaṭṭāšēhem wə'atā tīqar napši bo'ēnēkā waydabbēr mal'ak ywhh 'el- 'ēlīyāhū rēd 'ōtō 'al-ṭīrā' mippānāyw wayyāqom wayyēred 'ōtō 'el-hammelek

\textsuperscript{345} Sweeney, 1 and 2 Kings, 32, points this out.

He sent him a captain of fifty and his fifty men. He went up to him, since he was sitting on the peak of a hill, and he said to him, "Man of God! The king says, 'Come down!'"

Elijah answered and said to the captain of the fifty, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.

Again he sent him another captain of fifty and his fifty men. He went up and said to him, "Man of God, thus says the king: Come down quickly!"

Elijah answered and said to them, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men. The fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men.

Again he sent a third captain of fifty and his fifty men. The third captain of fifty went up and came and bowed onto his knees before Elijah and he pleaded with him and he said to him, "Man of God, let my life and the life of these your fifty servants be precious in your sight. Fire has come down from heaven and consumed the previous two captains of fifty and their fifty men. Now, please let my life be precious in your sight."

The messenger of Yahweh said to Elijah, "Go down with him, and do not be afraid of him. He rose and went down with him to the king.

2 Kings 1:9-15 has a complicated textual history. In the first instance, 2 Kings 1:10, the 'ēš comes min-ḥaššāmāyim. In the second instance, however, it is 'ēš-ʾēlōhîm that comes min-ḥaššāmāyim. One might think that the 'ēš-ʾēlōhîm here is a parallel expression to the 'ēš-yhwh seen in 1 Kings 18:38 and Numbers 11:1-3. Further analysis

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347 Contra M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, 2 Kings, Anchor Bible Commentary 11 (New Haven: Yale, 1988), 26. The evidence for textual disruption is as follows:

In 2 Kings 1:10 the text reads:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT</th>
<th>wattēred 'ēš</th>
<th>min-ḥaššāmāyim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In the parallel passage of 2 Kings 1:12, however, only the LXX contains an exact repetition v. 10:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LXX</th>
<th>*wattēred 'ēš</th>
<th>min-ḥaššāmāyim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT</th>
<th>wattēred 'ēš-ʾēlōhîm</th>
<th>min-ḥaššāmāyim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T. Jn</th>
<th>'ūnhāṭat 'išāṭā'</th>
<th>min qāḏām Adonai</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>min šāmāyāyā'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Vulgate and the Peshitta follow the MT.

Three instances of the phrase wattēred 'ēš min-ḥaššāmāyim occur in MT 2 Kings 1:9-12 before this expansion with the word ʾēlōhîm. It is hard to understand the reason for the expansion. A simpler explanation is provided in the graphic similarity of ʾēš-ʾēlōhîm and ʾiš-ʾēlōhîm. The latter phrase appears once in 2 Kings 1:10, and three times as 'iš-hāʾēlōhîm in 2 Kings 1:9, 11, 12 (cf. 1 Kings 17:18, 24). One can propose, then, that the LXX Vorlage of 2 Kings 1:10 and 12 both included ʾēš min-ḥaššāmāyim, whereas the Vorlage of the Vulgate and the Peshitta all contained the expansion now seen in the MT: 'ēš-ʾēlōhîm min-ḥaššāmāyim. The Targum Jonathan, meanwhile, also knew the expansion, although its rendering is likely influenced by Leviticus 9:24: 'ūnpāqāt 'išāṭā' min qāḏām Adonai.
indicates, however, that the ‘ēš-‘ēlōhîm is an expansion of the MT, and is therefore not a parallel to those other texts.

As a form of punishing divine fire, the ‘ēš (-‘ēlōhîm) min-haššāmāyim resembles the fire seen in the passages from Amos and in Genesis 19:24. It is sent min-haššāmāyim to punish evildoers. The source of the fire, at least in the MT, is ‘ēlōhîm, although in the LXX the identification is unclear. The fire comes at Elijah’s call, prompting Ben Sira to eulogize Elijah thus:

ἐν λόγῳ κυρίου ἀνέσχεν οὐρανόν
catήγαγεν οὕτως τρίς πῦρ

By the word of the Lord, he closed the heavens,
And also, three times he brought down fire. (Ben Sira 48:3)\textsuperscript{348}

Ben Sira refers to the two instances in this narrative, and the one instance in 1 Kings 18:38. The purpose of the fire here not to manifest Yahweh’s presence or even to indicate that he is nearby. It comes in response to Elijah’s prayer tēred ‘ēš min-haššāmāyim, "let fire come down from heaven," to punish the impertinence of the first two captains. The use of feminine verbs throughout the passage indicates that the fire acts on the behalf of Yahweh, who presumably remains at a distance. The fire in these passages, therefore, is best compared to the chastising fires in the first two chapters of Amos.

\textsuperscript{348} The Hebrew of Sirach 48:3 is poorly preserved:

\textit{bdbr ‘l [...] šymym}

[.....] ‘šwt

For the Hebrew, see Pancrantius C. Beentjes, \textit{The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew} (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 68; Leiden: Brill, 2003; Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 85.
F. Fire of Wrath

Preternatural fire often appears as a symbol for divine wrath. This is significant, since divine wrath itself shows signs of being a hypostasis. McCarter finds evidence for this in passages that show divine wrath as something separate from Yahweh, in one instance not being privy to divine action and in another acting contrary to the divine will. He compiles a list of passages, including Exodus 32:10, Psalm 78:49-50, Joshua 7:24-26, 2 Samuel 6:6-7 // 1 Chronicles 13:9-10. In each of these passages, Yahweh's anger acts as an automatic, punishing force. It also acts in ways that are contrary to Yahweh's long-term goals. The automatic, contrary features of Yahweh's anger are well drawn in the incident at Baal Peor in Numbers 25:3-5, in which Yahweh teaches Moses how to protect Israel from his own anger. McCarter also uses the interchange between Balaam and the *mal‘ak yhwh* in Numbers 22:22 to reveal the independence of divine anger. Yahweh's wrath, appearing in the form of a *mal‘āk*, does not know of the divine communication Balaam had received the night before. The strongest evidence of the independence of divine anger, McCarter argues, appears in 2 Samuel 24:1-15. The anger of Yahweh incites David to take a census of Israel. This is a sin (Exodus 30:12-13); as Joab hints to David, it shows a lack of faith in Yahweh. This passage makes sense only if one understands Yahweh's anger as something independent from Yahweh and capable of working in opposition to him. This is exactly the sense that 1 Chronicles 21 makes of the line; in a parallel passage, *‘ap-yhwh* becomes *šātān*. In the mind of the


350 McCarter, "Rage," 89.

composer of 1 Chronicles 21, the anger of Yahweh had become something independent of Yahweh, evidenced by the fact that it could act in opposition to him.

Preternatural fire is often a symbol of 'ap-yhwh. In spite of this, the hypostatic appearance of 'ap-yhwh does not seem to be reflected in narratives that describe a fiery divine wrath. For example, in Numbers 11:1-3, the ēš yhwh burns against the Israelite camp when they provoke Yahweh to anger.

When the people complained in the hearing of Yahweh, Yahweh heard. His anger was kindled and the fire of Yahweh burned among them and consumed the edges of the camp. The people cried out to Moses, and Moses prayed to Yahweh, and the fire subsided. He called the name of that place Taberah, because the fire of Yahweh burned among them.

The phrase 'ēš yhwh at first appears to be a reference to the elemental power that appears in 1 Kings 18:38. It shares few characteristics of that power, however. It is true that the fire acts in this passage. The verb tib’ar (she/it burns) in fact is the point of this narrative, which presents an etiology for the toponym Taberah.\(^{352}\) The 'ēš yhwh in this passage is a parallel expression for Yahweh's 'ap. It was kindled when Yahweh heard the complaints of the Israelites, and died away when Moses interceded for the people. The 'ēš yhwh here is completely a form of punishment; it inspires no worship and consumes no sacrifice. It is unlike, therefore the 'ēš-yhwh of 1 Kings 18:38 or the 'ēš of Leviticus 9:24. It is

\[^{352}\text{Numbers 11:1-3 is the first half of a doublet that continues in Numbers 11:4-34. Both elements of the doublet come from the J source. Noth attributed Numbers 11:1-3 to the J source on the basis of its "complaint-punishment structure." Martin Noth, }\text{A History of Pentateuchal Traditions}\text{ (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 1972), 124. Noth argues that Numbers 11:1-3 and 11:4-34, both from the J source, were originally different genres but were redacted together because of their similarities. See also Benjamin Sommer, }\text{"Reflection on Moses,}\text{ JBL 118 (1999) 601-625, and Pamela Tamarkin Reis, }\text{"Numbers XI: Seeing Moses Plain,}\text{ VT 55/2 (2005), 207ff for a discussion of the source history of this passage.}\]
similar to other fiery symbols for God's wrath, which are common in Israelite literature.353

A vivid description of the fire of Yahweh's wrath appears in Ezekiel 10:2-7.

wayyō’mer 'el-hā’iš lābuš habbaddîm wayyō’mer bō’ 'el-bēnōt laggalgal 'el-taḥat lakkōrub ūmālāl ‘hopnēkā gahālē-‘ēš mibbēnōt lakkōrubīm ūzārqā ‘al-hā’īr wayyāḇō’ lō’ēnāy wōhakkōrubīm ūmādīm mīmîn labbayit bōbō’ō ha’iš wōhe’ānān mallā’ ‘et-heḥāšēr happanīmīt wayyārom kōbōd-yhwh mē’al hakkōrub 'al miptan habbāyit wayyımālē’ habbāyit ‘et-he’ānān wōheḥāšēr mālā’ ‘et-nōgah kōbōd yhwh wōqōl kānpē hakkōrubīm nīṣmā’ ‘ad-heḥāšēr hahīṣōnā kōqāl ‘ēl-šadday bōdabbōrō wayyōhi basawwōtō ‘et-hā’īs lōbuš-habbaddīm lē’mōr qāh ‘ēš mibbēnōt laggalgal mibbēnōt lakkōrubīm wayyāḇō’ wayya’āmōd ‘ēšel hā’ōpān wayyišlah hakkōrub ‘et-yādō mibbēnōt lakkōrubīm ‘el-hā’ēš ‘āser bēnōt hakkōrubīm wayyiśśā’ wayyittēn ‘ēl-ḥōpnē lōbuš habbaddīm wayyiqqaḥ wayyēṣē’

He said to the man clothed in linen, "Go into the wheelwork under the cherub and fill your hands with coals of fire from among the cherubim and scatter over the city. I saw him go in. And the cherubim were standing at the south side of the house when the man went in, and the cloud filled the inner courtyard. And the kābōd of Yahweh went up from the cherubim to the threshold of the house, and the house was filled with the cloud, and the courtyard was filled with brightness of Yahweh's kābōd. The sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court; like the voice of the Almighty when he speaks. When he commanded the one dressed in linen, "Take fire from among the wheels, from among the cherubim," he came and stood next to the wheel. And the cherub stretched out a hand from among the cherubim to the fire that was among the cherubim, and he lifted some and gave it into the hands of the man dressed in linen, who took it and went out.

The fire that is among the wheelwork is first mentioned in Ezekiel 1:13, but it gets no further elaboration until Ezekiel 10:2-7. In this latter passage, the scattering of coals from the wheelwork over the city (10:2) decrees Jerusalem's fate.354

Exegetes see these coals as weapons or as a cultic reference. As weapons, these coals could be Ezekiel's analogue for the gehālîm in 2 Samuel 22: 9, 13// Psalm 18:9, 13-14 which symbolized the divine destructive force coming from heaven either as mythic fiery arrows or as lightning (15). They also bear a reminiscence to the oracles of fire in Amos 1-2, which had a divine component and a future military fulfillment. Greenberg and Block see the coals in this way; the coals represent Yahweh's consignment of the city to military destruction.355

Zimmerli and Houk, however, believe these coals are a reference to the heavenly analogue of the temple.356 If so, these coals are from the bronze altar of incense that burned before the holy of holies and may have been wheeled like other furnishings of the sanctuary.357 In the vision, the man scattering the coals wears priestly linen, reinforcing the impression that this is a temple vision.358 The man is ordered to zāraq 'al-hāʾîr, "scatter them over the city" (10:2). The verb zāraq often indicates a ritual action, specifically from rites of mourning (Job 2:12), the demolishing of a foreign altar (2 Chronicles 34:4), or the sprinkling of blood on the altar (Leviticus 1:5, 11, inter alia).359

354 No narrative in the book of Ezekiel details the fulfillment of this prophecy. Walther Zimmerli, Ezekiel I (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Augsburg Fortress, 1979), 250 argues that the power of Yahweh's command was such that its fulfillment was a foregone conclusion. Cf. Walter Baumgartner, "Ein Kapitel vom hebräischen Erzählungsstil," Eucharistarion für H. Gunkel (FRLANT NF 19; Göttingen, 1923), 145-157, especially 145-150.


358 Zimmerli, Ezekiel I, 250.

359 Houk (Ezekiel, 53-54) even goes so far as to claim that this fire has a purifying function. The cherub and the man clothed in linen do to Jerusalem with their coals what the seraph did for Isaiah in Isaiah 6:6-7. Block (Ezekiel, 322) argues against the last point, noting that if the city had been purified by this action
The word *zāraq* also appears in Exodus 9:8, when Moses flings dust up into the sky to initiate the plague of boils.

In spite of its vivid imagery, Ezekiel's vision does not advance the search for hypostatic fire. Even though the smoldering fire under the chariot has self-propelled, even living characteristics in Ezekiel 1:13 (it is *mithalleket*), the coals scattered over the city in Ezekiel 10 do not. They are propelled by the man dressed in linen, no action is predicated to them. They are instead a vivid symbol for the military destruction to come.

To conclude this section on divine wrath, one should note that wrath often appears with fiery characteristics, but overall wrath and fire are not the same thing. In Hosea 5:10, for example, the text compares Yahweh's wrath to poured-out water. Likewise, in spite of the many comparisons of fire and wrath, and in spite of the many instances of punishing fire (e.g. Amos 1-2), fire is not always wrathful; this study has already described several passages in which Yahwistic fire is theophanic. The best one can say about preternatural fire and divine wrath is that the former is often a good symbol for the latter.

**G. Conclusion**

Looking overall at these images of elemental "sent" fire, one sees both images of a divine destructive force and theophanic revelation. The "sent" fire in 2 Samuel 22:13 // Psalm 18:13, Amos 1-2, and 7:4, Genesis 19:24, Exodus 9:23-24, 2 Kings 1:9-16, Numbers 11:1-3, and Ezekiel 10:2-7 are all destructive. It should be noted, however, that

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then the marking of those who would be spared in Ezekiel 9:4-11. He also notes the confused description of the sanctuary furnishings, and the common use of fire in images of theophany and punishment (Block, *Ezekiel*, 321-322, citing Deut 4:24 as an example). Thus, Block concludes, the coals are a symbol of Jerusalem's consignment to fiery destruction.
2 Samuel 22:7-20 // Psalm 18:7-20 and Ezekiel 10 are also theophanies, as are Ezekiel 1, 1 Kings 18:38, and 1 Kings 19:12. Fire punishes but it also inspires faith. The fire is generally without a clear form, although storm motifs like māṭār, bārād and gāhal appear.

What is significant about most of these instances of “sent fire” is that the end willed by God is accomplished by the fire. Images of destructive fire indicate by the gender of their verbs that the fire is the agent of the destruction. Yahweh's direct agency in destroying the cities on the plain in Genesis 19:25, indicated by the masculine verb yahāpōk, only highlights the agency attributed to the fire in Amos 1-2 and 7:4; Exodus 9:23-24, 2 Kings 1:9-16, and Numbers 11:1-3. Similarly, in the theophanies of 1 Kings 18:38 and 19:12, the action of the fire, acts perceptibly to draw attention to the unseen deity.

IV. Objects and Beings of Fire

Although fire does not have a material essence or a fixed form, sometimes a fire distinct from Yahweh takes the form of a material object or supernatural being. Such representations are another type of speculation on the nature and activity of fire sent out from Yahweh. In these narratives, preternatural fire took on a specific form.

A. Chariots of Fire

1. 2 Kings 2:11-12: Elijah

One type of fiery materiality was the heavenly chariot of fire, mentioned in 2 Kings 2:11-12, and 2 Kings 6:17, and perhaps in Ezekiel 1 and 10. This vivid and
strange image has inspired art, music, and at least one film. By contrast, it has generated surprisingly little commentary. In 2 Kings 2:11-12, by far the better known narrative, a chariot of fire arrives just before Elijah ascends to heaven in a storm wind:

\[
\text{wayyapridû bên šônêhem wayyâl 'êliyahû bass ãrâ haššâmâyim we 'êliśâ 'râ 'eh wayhû màšà 'eq 'âbî 'âbî rekeb yi(608,229),(989,767)

They were going along, walking and talking, and suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a storm wind to heaven. Elisha was watching and crying out, "My father! My father! Israel's chariots and its riders!" When he could see him no longer, he grasped his clothes and tore them to pieces.

Whether the sa'ârâ is identical to or concomitant with the rekeb-'ëš is unclear. Elijah and Elisha are separated by a rekeb-'ëš, "a chariot of fire," but then a sa'ârâ, "a storm wind" carries Elijah away. Combinations of storm imagery and military imagery are known from elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. One already analyzed above comes from 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18 (see pgs. 63-68). Elijah's ascension in fire is reminiscent of the ascension of the mal'ak yhwh in Judges 13:20 (discussed in the next chapter, pgs. 175-177).

In light of these references, the chariot of fire in 2 Kings 2:11-12 represents a point of connection between three realms of existence. The sa'ârâ, from the natural world, is related in some way to the rekeb-'ëš, a military image that suggests the human world, and it carries Elijah away to heaven (2 Kings 2:1). Fire is one of the few phenomena attributed to all three of these realms of existence, making it a suitable matrix for the form of the heavenly chariot.
2. 2 Kings 6:17: Elisha

A second instance of a fiery chariot appears in 2 Kings 6:17 reads:

```
wayyipqah yhwh 'et-'ēnē hann'ar wayy'ar' wahinnēh hāhār māl'ē 'sūsim worekeb 'ēš sābībōt 'ēlīšā
```

Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, open his eyes so that he may see." Thus Yahweh opened the eyes of the boy and he saw: the mountain was filled with horses and a chariot of fire all around Elisha.

In this instance, unseen divine chariots prepare to protect Dothan against the Aramean king's army. In 2 Kings 6:18, Elisha prays for the Arameans to be struck with blindness, and his prayers are answered. The narrative does not explicitly attribute the victory to the fiery chariots, and no battle ever occurs. The military aspect of the chariots remains only implicit, and serves to highlight the miraculous intervention of Yahweh.

The major commentaries do not offer many insights on 2 Kings 6:17 or on the relationship of these two fiery chariot narratives. When they mention 2 Kings 6:17 at all, they refer back to their comments on 2 Kings 2:11-12. The images have significant differences, however. Elisha's chariot in 2 Kings 6:17 resembles Yahweh's war chariots in Psalm 68:18, Habakkuk 3:8, and Isaiah 66:15. Although these other chariots are fiery, the motif in each case symbolizes Yahweh's power to protect Israel against its enemies. Elisha's chariot combines that protective motif with the tradition of Yahweh's fiery weapons, discussed above.

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360 Marvin Sweeney speculates that narrative of Elijah's ascension is a Deuteronomistic composition the purpose of which was to establish a link between originally independent narratives of Elijah and Elisha. The sō 'ārā is a storm phenomenon similar to meteorological motifs in the Elijah story (1 Kings 17:1, 18:41-45, 19:11), and the fiery chariot is an Elisha motif from the tradition attested in 2 Kings 6:17 (1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007], 261-263).
In spite of appearances, the fiery chariots of the Hebrew Bible are not solar images. Although Yahweh does have solar characteristics in certain biblical narratives, solar imagery does not play a role in either 2 Kings 2:11 or 2 Kings 6:17. If the fiery chariot motif is rooted in a natural phenomenon, it is more likely a storm. The chariot in 2 Kings 2:11 appears with a səʿārâ, as does the mobile divine throne in Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:4), which will be discussed below. Other divine chariots in the ancient Near East, though not related directly to these passages, hint at similar storm images. Ba’lu's oft-repeated title rkb ’rpt, "rider on the clouds," also combines storm imagery with a divine vehicle. A hymn to Enlil's chariot attributed to Ishme-Dagan of Isin (1953-1935 BCE) also combines storm imagery with a divine vehicle. The hymn actually describes two interconnected chariots: one mythic and one cultic. The distinction between these two chariots does not always remain clear. A specifically mythic portion appears in lines 70-72:

\[ \text{gišgigir} /\text{nim-gin} /\text{gir-gir-re} \ [X \ X] \text{mur-ša4-bi dug3-ga-/âm} \]


362 Yahweh is compared to the sun in Psalm 84:12. The verb zrḥ, "to dawn," describes Yahweh's arrival in Deuteronomy 33:2, Isaiah 60:1, Hosea 6:3. The verb also appears with El as its subject in Kuntillet 'Ajrud inscription 4.2.2: wbzrḥ. ’l.br[m], "When El shone forth on the heights..." Zev Meshel, et al., *Kuntillet 'Ajrud (Horvat Teman): An Iron Age II Religious Site on the Judah-Sinai Border* (ed. Liora Freud; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2012), 110. The temple housed votive marksāt haššemeš (chariots of the Sun) until they were removed during Josiah's reform (2 Kings 23:11).


Civil reads: \[^{364}\text{gišgigir nim-gin, gir-gir-re [gû-dê]/ ur5-ša4-bi dug3-ga-â[m]}\]

Klein reads: \[^{364}\text{gišgigir ni-gin, gir-gir-re [gû-dê]/ ur5-ša4-bi du10-galâ[m]}\]
The chariot flashes like lightning; its roar is good,
His donkeys are hitched to the yoke.
Enlil goes out on his majestic (votive?) chariot in radiance.

These lines, although they almost certainly exercised no influence on the fiery chariots of
the Hebrew Bible, do reveal a typology of divine vehicles that emphasizes speed,
powerful sound, and brilliance. Many cultures associated the wind, thunder, and
lightning of mighty, fast-moving storms with divine vehicles.

One cannot deny, however, that the storm imagery in 2 Kings 2:11 is vestigial at
best. The chariots in 2 Kings 6:17 burn like divine weapons, a motif that is also
Preternatural storm fire and preternatural military or chastising fire both reflect the power
of God, and, as in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18, can play off each other in the same poetic
text. In 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18 as well as Ezekiel 10, both storm and military/chastising
fire come from the nōgah that surrounds the divine presence (see above, pgs. 121-123).
Although it is not explicit, in the imagination of the writers of the Hebrew Bible, the fire
of these chariots likely had a similar source: objects from Yahweh's presence glow with
reflected or embedded fire. These fiery chariots do not embody Yahweh, but their flames
mediate Yahweh's power acting at a distance.

3. Ezekiel

A possible third reference to chariots of fire appears in Ezekiel's visions of the
wheeled divine throne (Ezekiel 1 and 10). Although Ezekiel never calls this throne
(kissē’ in 1:26 [2x], 10:1; 43:6) a chariot, several elements in his description hint at that
identification. Descriptions of its motion (1:9, 17-21; 10:8, 12), its four wheels (1:15-21; 10:9-10), and its "team" of ḥāyyôt / kərubîm (1:5-14; 10:14, 21-22) give the impression of a vehicle. Mentions of fire, coals, and lightning reveal its fiery appearance (Ezekiel 1:4, 13 and 10:2-7). Later traditions identified this as a chariot without hesitation. Some modern commentators agree, noting the traditions of throne chariots elsewhere in the ancient Near East. Several similarities between Ezekiel's throne and the chariots of 2 Kings support this identification. Both the throne and chariot of 2 Kings 2:11 are accompanied by a səʾārā (a storm wind). The chariots in all three passages are fiery. Radiant beings draw the chariot in each passage. In 2 Kings 2:11-12 and 6:17, these are sūsēʾēš; in Ezekiel (1:5-14; 10:14, 21-22), they are ḥāyyôt / kərubîm whose appearance is kəmarʾēh habbāzāq, "like the appearance of lightning." In both cases too, the wheeled vehicle goes out to meet a prophet, although in Ezekiel's vision it is at the beginning of his career, whereas in Elijah's it is at the end. The fire of Ezekiel's chariot, like the


chariots in 2 Kings, does not embody Yahweh as much as it symbolizes his power acting through an intermediary object.\textsuperscript{367}

**B. Genesis 15:17 and Isaiah 31:9 - Yahweh as tannûr**

Abram's vision in Genesis 15:17 includes two fiery images that have perplexed commentators of the text.

\begin{verbatim}
wayyôhî haššemeš bâ ’á wa’âlātâ hâyâ\textsuperscript{368} wɔhinnêh tannûr ’ãšân wɔlappîd ’êś ‘ãșer ‘abar bênc hâggozârim hâ ’êlleh
\end{verbatim}

The sun set and it was dark. There was a smoking brazier, and a torch of fire that passed between these pieces.

Commentators have struggled with this imagery. Skinner compared the *tannûr* and *lappîd ’êš* to the pillar of cloud and fire in the Pentateuch.\textsuperscript{369} Speiser believes instead that these images come from an Akkadian magical text, and cites *Maqlü* II 190-191 as an example:

\begin{verbatim}
aš-šap-pa-rak-kim-ma a-li-ku ti-nu-ru āgira mu-un-na-ah-zu\textsuperscript{370} 
ašapparakkim-ma àliku tinûru Girru munnahzu
\end{verbatim}

I have dispatched against you a blazing furnace, spreading fire.


\textsuperscript{368} The LXX has φλὸξ ἐγένετο, reading *lahat* instead of *'âlātā* due likely to graphic similarity and improved subject-verb agreement. Paul Joüon and T. Muraoka, *A Grammar of Biblical Hebrew* (Rome: Gregorian Press, 2011), §150 k lists several instances in biblical Hebrew in which a feminine subject takes a masculine noun. Such lack of agreement is common enough not to be problematic.


\textsuperscript{370} G. Meier, *Die assyrische Beschwörnungssammlung Maqlü* (AfO 2; Osnabrück: Biblio-Verlag, 1967), 20.
The Hebrew author, Speiser believes, inserted these images into a covenant ritual, reusing the lappid 'ēš and tannûr to create a vivid and ominous image.³⁷¹ Von Rad believes this text foreshadows the divine fire that appears during the covenant ritual on Sinai (Exodus 19:18, 24:17).³⁷² Westermann, like Von Rad, thinks that these signs refer to the Sinai theophany and that they are nur Zeichen, die Gott repräsentieren (only signs that represent God).³⁷³

Scholars have reached more consensus regarding the ritual.³⁷⁴ Treaties attested throughout the ancient Near East were often concluded with such rituals, "usually sealed by a rite -- for example, an oath, a sacred meal, blood sacrifice, invocation of blessings and curses -- which makes it binding."³⁷⁵ The ritual described in Jeremiah 34:18-20 is often held up as an example of a rite similar to the one mentioned in Genesis 15:17:

wənātattī 'et-hā 'ānāšim haʾōbōrim 'et-bərīt 'āšer lō'-hēqīmū 'et-dībərē habbōrīt 'āšer kārətû ləpānāy hāʾēgel 'āšer kārətû lišōnayim wayyaʾabōrū bēn ṣātārāy wāsērā əyęhūdā wašārē yərūšālayim ḥassārēsim wəhakkōhānim wəkōl 'am hāʾārēṣ hāʾōbōrim bēn bītrē hāʾēgel wənātattī 'ōtām ḥāyād 'ōyābēḥem ṣātārāy məbāqṣē népāšām wəhāyətām nəblātām lōmaʾākāl lōʾ ōp haššāmāyim ūlōbēḥēmat hāʾārēṣ

I will make the people transgressing my covenant, who did not fulfill the words of the covenant that they made with me, (like) the calf that they cut in two and passed between its parts. The princes of Judah and the princes of Jerusalem, the officials and the priests, and all the people of the land that passed between the parts of the calf: I will give them into the power of their enemies and into the power of those seeking their life. Their corpses will be food for the birds of the sky and the animals of the land.

Sources from outside Israel also contain such rituals. The Sefire treaty (I A, 39-40) between king Bar-Ga’yah of Ktk and Matî’ël of Arpad reads:

\[
[w’yk zy] ygzr ‘gl’ znh kn ygzr mt’l wygzrn rbwh
\]

[And just as this] calf is cut in two, thus may Matiel be cut, and may his nobles be cut.376

Genesis 15:17 calls the pieces of the sacrificed animal haggɔzərîm, and the verb ygzr appears three times in lines 39-40 of the Sefire treaty, suggesting that the imagery of Genesis 15:17 was drawn from the technical language of treaties.377 In both cases, the violence done to the animal is a foreshadowing of the violence that will be done to violators of the treaty.378 In Genesis 15:17, the lappid ‘ëš goes forth from the tannûr to represent Yahweh and pass between the pieces. The action of the lappid ‘ëš symbolizes Yahweh's acceptance of the terms and punishments of the covenant.


377 The word does not appear in the Akkadian treaty between Aššur-nerari and Mati’-il reproduced in S. Parpola and K. Watanabe (New Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths [SAS 2; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1988], xxvii-xxviii, 8-9). In lines 25-28, the treaty has forms of the verb qatāpu, “to pluck off” or “cut off.”

One of the most peculiar aspects of this narrative is the use of two symbols, the \textit{tannûr} and \textit{lappîd 'ēš}, to represent Yahweh's activity in this rite. Texts like Exodus 19:18 or 24:17 might use a cluster of related phenomena to indicate the localized divine presence, but it is difficult to find a text in which two discrete phenomena represent the divine presence in the same narrative. A close reading of the text, and a comparison of the \textit{tannûr} and \textit{lappîd 'ēš} to other biblical uses of the same symbols, indicates that perhaps these two phenomena do not represent Yahweh's presence and action in the same way.

One can find other texts in the Hebrew scriptures that use the words \textit{tannûr} and a \textit{lappîd} for instances of preternatural fire. The JE (non-P) passage in Exodus 20:18 uses the word \textit{lappîdîm} to describe theophanic lightning. In Ezekiel 1:13, something with the appearance of \textit{lappîdîm} moves back-and-forth (\textit{mithalleket}) in the middle of the living creatures. This is the same fire that in Ezekiel 10 is scattered over the city (see pgs. 145-147). In these passages, the word \textit{lappîd} signifies a type of "accompanying" fire that can move on its own and be sent out to act at a distance.

The word \textit{tannûr}, meanwhile, appears in Isaiah 31:9 to describe Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem:

\begin{verbatim}
\textit{wəsalʾō mimmāgôr yaʿābôr}
\textit{wəhattû mimnēs šārāyw}
\textit{nəʾūm yhwh}
\textit{ʾāšer-ʿûr lô bəšîyyón}
\textit{wətannûr lô birûśālāim}
\end{verbatim}

*His rock will pass away from terror and his officers will retreat in panic from the standard,* says Yahweh whose fire (ʿûr) is in Zion and whose furnace (\textit{tannûr}) is in Jerusalem.
The 'ûr and tannûr symbolize Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem. Although the nuances are not entirely clear, Isaiah is almost certainly referring to the cultic fire of the Jerusalem temple. Wildberger especially emphasizes this; the domestic nature of the 'ûr and tannûr reveal that Yahweh's bayit is his real "home" in Jerusalem.  

Kaiser specifically links the image in Isaiah to Genesis 15:17, comparing the lappîd 'ēš of Genesis 15:17 to the 'ûr of Isaiah 31:9, and concluding that both texts demonstrate a tradition of fiery symbols for Yahweh. Oswalt and Berges believe that the two symbols in this text represent both aspects of Yahwistic fire, namely, its sanctity and destructive power.

As seen in chapter 3 (pgs. 89-92; 103-104), fire and smoke embody Yahweh in the other covenant narratives, specifically Exodus 19:18, 24:17, and Deuteronomy 5:24. Exodus 19:18 uses the name of a furnace similar to a tannûr, a kibšān, "kiln," as a simile for the appearance of the presence of Yahweh on Mount Sinai (pgs. 89-90). Keel's studies reveal that both cone-shaped furnaces are potent symbols for Yahweh. Although not many scholars have followed his argument that these descriptions are rooted in volcanic motifs, his insights give further support to the notion that the tannûr in these passages are related to the theophanic kibšān in Exodus 19:18. These descriptions of furnaces also show a link between covenant narratives and descriptions of the cult.

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379 Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (trans. Thomas Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 220, discusses whether are technical terms for cultic fire or domestic terms applied symbolically to the cult fire to emphasize Yahweh's deep identification with Jerusalem. He argues for the latter, symbolic use. The words 'ûr and tannûr, he claims, are common in domestic contexts, but rare in cultic ones.


both sets of passages, Yahweh appears in fire and smoke with a vigor comparable to a furnace.

Such similarity between Yahweh's appearances in covenant and cult help explain how a word used to describe the cultic fire in Jerusalem in Isaiah 31:9 could also mystically appear in Genesis 15:17 and play Yahweh's role in the narrative. If a vivid image of smoke and fire was the indicator of Yahweh's presence, this explains the symbolism of the tannûr and lappîd 'ēš in Genesis 15:17. They represent Yahweh's localized presence in a covenant ritual that requires the active participation of the contracting parties.

A careful reading of the passage indicates that only the lappîd 'ēš, and not the tannûr, passes through the gozārīm.

wəhinneh tannûr 'āšān wəlappîd 'ēš 'āšer 'abar bēn haggōzārīm hāʾelleh

There was a smoking tannûr, and a torch of fire that passed between these pieces. The verb 'abar is singular, and describes the action of the lappîd 'ēš. Although a compound subject can take a singular verb, nothing in this passage necessitates such a reading. The tannûr and the lappîd 'ēš are both present, but only the lappîd 'ēš passes between the pieces.

At the same time, the parallels suggest that the tannûr, and not the lappîd 'ēš, refers to Yahweh's presence. Variations of the word lappîd describe fiery ministering spirits. Such is the case here. Yahweh arrives in a smoky form that the text calls a tannûr; the presence of fire is implied by the smoke, but not stated. The implicit fire takes on an explicit identity of its own, the lappîd 'ēš, as it passes between the gozārīm.

383 Joüon §150 p discusses singular verbs and compound subjects.
As in the many examples discussed in chapter 3, fiery phenomena describe the active divine presence. In Genesis 15:17, however, the fiery phenomenon acts with an identity, the *lappîd 'ēš*, that is distinct from the smoky and fiery *tannūr*, which represents Yahweh's localized presence. On the one hand, the *lappîd 'ēš* appears as a ministering spirit, of the type described by the word *lappîd* elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. On the other hand, the *lappîd 'ēš* represents the presence of Yahweh insofar as Yahweh must pass between the *gəzārîm* to finalize the covenant with Abram. It is as if Yahweh has sent out the active part of himself, represented by the *lappîd 'ēš*, to enact the covenant ritual with Abram. To use language reminiscent of Sommer's "fluidity tradition" (see pgs. 49-55), it is as if the *lappîd 'ēš* is a fragment of Yahweh at work in the narrative. A discussion of this image continues in chapter 6 (pgs. 207-209), where it factors heavily into the discussion of fire as a semi-independent hypostasis of Yahweh.

*C. Psalm 50:3 and 97:3-4*

Two passages, using "consuming fire" language also found in the P-source, Deuteronomy, and Isaiah, appear in Psalm 50:3 and 97:3-4.

```
yāḇîw ʾēlōhēnū wəʾal-yeḥēraš
ʾēš-lōpānāyw tōʾkēl
ūsōḇībāyw nišʾārā mōʾōd (Psalm 50:3)
```

Our God comes and is not silent
the fire before him consumes
around him a storm is raging

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ʾēš lōpānāyw tēlēk
ūtōlahēt sābīb sārāyw
hēʾ īrū bərāqāyw tēbēl
rāʾ ātā wattaḥēl hāʾāreṣ (Psalm 97:3-4)
```

Fire goes before him
and ignites his enemies all around.
His lightnings illumine the world,
The earth saw and writhed.

The theme of Psalm 50 is covenant renewal, which brings to mind the lappîd 'ēš that accompanies Yahweh is Genesis 15:17. Psalm 97, meanwhile, celebrates Yahweh's victory over the forces of chaos, and his resulting kingship.384 Broader discussions of date and Sitz-im-Leben are inconclusive.385 In either case, the references to fire come from the storm-imagery that underlies narratives of Yahweh's march to battle.386 In these psalms, the consuming fire is not a symbol for Yahweh's action (as in Deuteronomy 4:24 and 9:3) or even something that issues from his mouth (as in 2 Samuel 18:9 // Psalm 18:9). It is an elemental force that "goes before him" (lopânây w têlêk) in battle, igniting (tələhêt) his adversaries. The verbs that describe these actions are feminine. In Deuteronomy 9:3, masculine verbs emphasize Yahweh's actions as he crosses over, destroys, and subdues (‘ōbêr, yašmîd, yaknî’); he is embodied in the fire. In Psalm 97:3, the fire accompanies Yahweh, and acts on his behalf.

The fire of these psalms resembles the elemental force described in earlier passages, but it is something more. As discussed above, Francis I. Andersen recognizes the fire of Psalm 97:3 to be a personified being who travels in the divine war-train.387 Andersen believes that Psalm 97:3 reflects traditions found also in Habakkuk 3:4-6, Deuteronomy 33:2-3, the Samalian Hadad inscription of Panamuwa I (KAI 214:2, 2-3,

385 Kraus, Psalms 1-59, 491. Hans Joachim Kraus, Psalms 60-150, translated by Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 257-258.
386 Clifford Psalms 73-150, 124. Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 259.
11, 18), and Mesopotamian protective amulets. In these texts, fire often appears among a deity's war-retinue, where it appears to the deity's right (Habakkuk 3:3, Deuteronomy 33:2) or as his advance guard (Epic of Erra 1:10-12, 99; Psalm 97:3). The rearguard deity in Habakkuk 3 and many other lists is rešep, a fully developed deity in the Eblite and Canaanite pantheons. The parallel between 'ēš who "burns up Yahweh's enemies on every side," and 'Išum, to whom Erra says, at-ta a-līk maḥ-rī-ia a-līk arkī-ia, "it is you who walk before me and walk behind me," (1:99) also suggests a tradition in which 'ēš was a protective companion of the god marching to war.

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389 A discussion of the deity ršp is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Readers are directed to Edward Lipiński, *Resheph: A Syro-Canaanite Deity* (OLA 181; Leuven: Peeters, 2009) for a thorough treatment of the topic. Traditions of the deity ršp evoke similar descriptions of Yahweh. Both were archers (see 2 Samuel 22:15 // Psalm 18:15). KTU 1.82.3, invokes Ba’lu to shatter the arrows of ršp: yašabbītu ba’lu hiṣṣī rašpi (Gregorio del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion: According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit* (trans. Wilfred G. E. Watson; Bethesda, Md.: CDL Press, 1999), 374, 378 n. 160). A similar tradition appears in *KAI* 32.3. 4, in which the name of the deity appears as ršp ḫṣ, "ršp of the arrow." In EA 35:12-14, the deity ršp appears as a source of plague, whereas in Deuteronomy 32:23-24, šhumē rešep (consuming pestilence), in tandem with mazzē rāʾ āb (barren hunger) and waqētēb mərîrî (bitter plague) are the "arrows" of Yahweh's chastisement (see also the text from Habakkuk 3:5 discussed above). Three biblical passages connect the word rešep to fiery motifs. In Psalm 76:4 (Eng. 76:3), Yahweh shatters the rišpē-qašet, the "flashing bow." Psalm 78:48, which recounts the plague of fiery hail in Exodus 9:23, reads wayyasgēr labbārād baʿīrām umiğnē hem lāršāpīm, "He consigned their beasts to hail, their cattle to the rašāpīm." In Song 8:6, it is said of love that rašāpēha rišpē 'ēš šalhebetāyā, "its flashes are flashes of fire, a mighty flame." Although the deity ršp is too complex for one to reduce to a simple description, a word identical to his name is the Hebrew word for a sudden flash of light or fire. This, perhaps, is a demythologized vestige of older beliefs regarding ršp's relationship to fire or lightning. See also T. Lewis, "Deities, Underworld," *NIDB* 2:88; and P. Xella, "Resheph," *DDD*, 700-702.

390 Psalm 104:4 relates to this discussion. Many commentators correct 'ēš lōḥēt to 'ēš wālahat. The fiery beings 'ēš and laḥat are məšārātāy (his ministers), who accompany Yahweh along with storm images like mayīm (3), 'əbīm (3), rūaḥ (3-4), and ġōl-raʿ amōskā (7). Personified 'ēš and laḥat at first appear similar to the 'ēš in Psalm 97 and in the texts Andersen cited in his discussion of Habakkuk 3:4-6. Psalm 104 personifies many natural forces and animals, however. The psalmist may have known references to accompanying beings of fire and certainly knew of Leviathan. The personifications in Psalm 104,
D. The śrāpîm of Isaiah 6:1-7

A different sort of protective, fiery companion appears in Isaiah 6:1-7:

In the year of the death of king Uzziah, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and exalted, and the hem (of his robe) filled the temple. Six-winged seraphs were standing above him; each had six wings. With two each covered his face, with two each covered his feet, and with two he would fly. Each called out, one to the other, and said "Holy, Holy, Holy! Yahweh of Hosts! All the earth is full of his kābôd! The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voice of the one calling and the temple was filled with smoke.

And I said, "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I am living among a people of unclean lips, but my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of Hosts! Then one of the seraphs flew to me and in his hand was a coal; he took from the altar with tongs. The seraph touched my mouth and he said, "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt will depart and your sin will be blotted out."

The beings Isaiah sees here as fiery, winged, serpentine throne guardians, are the result of a merger of Semitic and Egyptian traditions. The Semitic strand of this tradition, the root śrp, "to burn, burning," appears at Ebla as sà-ra-pá-tum and as śrp at Ugarit, with the meaning "burnt offering" in both places.391 In Hebrew, the root is most

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391 Kraus proposes that 'ēš wālahat is a mythic reference, believing it to be a reference to throne attendants known elsewhere as śrāpîm (Kraus, Psalms 60-150, 299-300).
common in its verbal form, meaning "to burn." The snakes that attacked Israel in Numbers 21:8 were called hannəḥāšîm haṣṣərāpîm, "burning snakes," and the serpentine image Moses cast to ward off the effects of their venom was a part of the temple paraphernalia until Hezekiah's reign (2 Kings 18:14). The use of variations of the word šərāpîm, "burning," to describe a venomous snake is the Israelite contribution to this tradition.392

The Egyptian strand of this tradition comes from words for throne guardians. The throne guardian Wadjet was a cobra deity who guarded the king. Over time, her iconography merged with the king's vulture guardian Nekhbet, yielding a guardian who took the form of a winged snake.393 Her name was also given as jḥ.t or nzrt, both meaning "flame", and in the Kadesh battle inscription (281-282) she fought with the king by incinerating his enemies in battle.394 These throne guardians were known in Palestine through iconography.395 In Israel, however, they were known by a different Egyptian name, srrf, a metathesis of the middle Egyptian sfr, meaning "griffin."396 This was probably due to the similarity of the Egyptian srrf to the Hebrew šrp, meaning "to burn" and "poisonous snake." The throne companions Isaiah sees in his vision are the Israelite


version of Wadjet serpents, whose burning nature protected an accompanied Yahweh's presence. Throne guardians that use fire as a weapon will appear in Genesis 3:24 and Leviticus 10:2 and will be discussed in the next chapter. What is noteworthy here is that these beings do not protect the throne but instead use fire to purify Isaiah in preparation for his audience with Yahweh. These šərāpīm are important to the study of hypostases, not because they are a hypostatized "burning," but because they are another instance of fiery divine attendants, already seen in Psalm 50 and 97.

E. Exodus 3:2-5

One of the best known images of preternatural fire revealing the presence of Yahweh appears in the narrative of Moses and the burning bush in Exodus 3:2-5.

wayyērā’ mal’ak yhwh 'ēlāyw bo'labbat-‘ēs mittōk hassōneh wayyar’ wēhinnēh hassōneh bō’ēr bā’ēs wohassōneh ‘ēnennū ‘ukkāl wayyō’mer mōsheh ‘āsūrā-nā’ wō’reeh ‘et-ḥammar’eh ḥaggādōl ḥazzēh maddūa’ lō’-yib’ar hassōneh wayyar’ yhwh kā sār līr’ōt wayyiqrā’ ‘ēlāyw ‘ēlōhīm mittōk hassōneh wayyō’mer mōsheh mōsheh wayyō’mer hinnēnī wayyō’mer ‘al-tiqrāb hālōm šal-na’ālēkā mē’al raggēkā kī hammāqōm ‘āše’r ‘attā ‘ōmēd ‘ēlāyw ḍumat-qōdeš hū’

The mal’ak yhwh appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the bush. He saw that the bush was burning in fire, but the bush was not consumed. Moses said, let me turn and see this great sight; why is the bush not burnt? Yahweh saw that he turned to see, and God called to him out of the bush, and said, "Moses! Moses!" He said, "Here I am!" He said, "Approach no closer. Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

Commentators have not reached consensus on the structure of the relationships among the mal’ak yhwh, God, Yahweh, and the flame of fire. Noth resolves this by making a distinction between visual and auditory phenomena. The "appearance" is the
fiery *mal'ak yhwh* but the speech is Yahweh. Propp notes that such ambiguity appears in a number of narratives in which the *mal'ak yhwh* makes an appearance. He gives three reasons for this. First, Israelite authors, he believes, are cautious about direct references to the divine. Second, in many ancient Near Eastern religious traditions, minor deities played the role of messengers. In Israel, however, those minor deities had been partially or completely "reabsorbed" into Yahweh. Third, regarding messengers in general, he argues for a transfer of identity from the dispatcher to the messenger. This happens with angels and, Propp claims, with human prophets. In fact, he lists three narratives in which Yahweh's identity transfers over to a human messenger (Judges 6:34, 1 Chronicles 12:19, 2 Chronicles 24:20). Propp also notes the use of the word "messenger" to describe divine images in ancient Egypt. In each case, the narratives show an "interpenetration" of the deity and the being or image serving as the visible manifestation.

The fiery *mal’ak yhwh* in Exodus 3:2 is reminiscent of fiery messengers in cognate literature. A particularly fascinating example appears in KTU 1.2 i 32:

\[\text{ỉštm} \ . \ \text{yitmr} \ . \ ťrb \ . \ \text{lšt} \ . \ \text{[lš]nhm}\]

\[\text{‘išitu} \ . \ \text{‘išitāmi} \ . \ \text{yi’tamarā} \ . \ \text{ḥarbu} \ . \ \text{laṭūstu} \ . \ \text{[la]šānū-humā}^{401}\]

A fire, two fires, they appeared; a sharpened sword were their tongues.

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399 To this should also be added Exodus 34:29. After witnessing Yahweh's *kābōd* and speaking with him, the skin of Moses' face shone. This presents a parallel to Exodus 3:2-6.

400 Propp, *Exodus 1-18*, 199

401 For the vocalization and notes, see Smith, *Baal Cycle*, 267.
Intriguingly, an earlier line in the text (22), calls these beings *mlāk ym* (*malʾakē yammi*), "messengers of Yamm"). Their appearance is enough to inspire fear in the assembled gods (23-24). The vocabulary of the Ugaritic text contains words (*išt, mlʾak*) remarkably similar to the Hebrew (*ʾēš, malāk*). Although the evidence is sparse, this passage does show similarities between the fiery messengers of both Ugaritic and Hebrew lore. A similar tradition may also lie behind Judges 6:21 and 13:20, to be discussed in the next chapter (pgs. 173-177). Similar Canaanite lore may also underlie the tradition recorded in Philo's *Phoenician History* 808:3, 27, that Φῶς, Πῦρ and Φλόξ were the children of Γένους, although these beings are not messengers.402 One is reminded of Mowinckel's point that later religious speculations can revivify ancient deities.403

The literature on the *malʾak yhwh* is extensive, and a full discussion of the topic is beyond the scope of this dissertation.404 There is no simple way to explain the relationship between Yahweh and the *malʾak yhwh*. In one set of texts, as illustrated by Judges 6:11-23 (treated in chapter 5, pgs. 173-175), the two seem to be the same; the speaker is identified as *malʾak yhwh* several times, but the words he speaks are clearly Yahweh's. In a second set of texts, the *malʾak yhwh* is clearly differentiated from Yahweh, as in 2 Samuel 24:16, when Yahweh orders the *malʾak yhwh* to stay his hand before the *malʾak yhwh* destroyed Jerusalem. In a third set of texts, which includes Exodus 3:2, the identification is unclear. A *malʾak yhwh* appears to Moses, but the


403 Sigmund Mowinckel, "Hypostasen," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 2nd Ed. [RGG²]* (Mohr-Siebeck 1928), col. 2066.


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speech comes from Yahweh himself. Meier believes that the second set of texts reflect a tradition in which Yahweh sends out supernatural envoys to accomplish his will on earth. In the first and third sets, according to Meier, the phrase *mal’ak yhwh* is an interpolation for *yhwh*, reflecting a "theological discomfort" with the text's description of Yahweh's behavior or location. Newsom argues instead that the phrase *mal’ak yhwh* in the first and third set is original, and reflects the theological tension that exists between a belief in real interactions with Yahweh and the belief that an unmediated encounter with Yahweh is impossible. Camilla von Heijne believes that the ambiguities of many of the *mal’ak yhwh* passages reflect a chronological development in the tradition of divine encounters. In an early text like Judges 13, the *mal’ak yhwh* is not clearly distinct from Yahweh (treated in chapter 5, pgs. 175-177). In a late text like the apocryphal book of Tobit, the angel Raphael is an ontologically independent being. Reviewing such studies, it remains clear that no one of these hypotheses can account for every instance of the *mal’ak yhwh* in the Hebrew scriptures.

Exodus 3:2 has a complicated tradition of redaction, and this limits the number of claims one can make about the relationship of the fire to the *mal’ak yhwh* or to Yahweh. Although the *mal’ak yhwh* in Exodus 3:2 may indeed reflect mythic traditions of fiery messengers, neither the *mal’ak yhwh* nor the fire appear to embody or mediate Yahweh. Yahweh causes the fire to appear, but a careful reading of the passage indicates that, when Yahweh speaks, it is *mittôk hassônêh* "out of the bush," and not *mittôk hâ ’ēs* "out of

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407 von Heijne, Messenger, 368.
the fire." The text moreover does not give us an image of Yahweh's fiery body localized presence from which this fiery mal'ak yhwh has been sent forth.\textsuperscript{408} So, one cannot make the case that the fire is Yahweh, or that the fire somehow manifests the fiery divine nature at a distance. Turning to a piece of external evidence, and doing so with every caution, it is intriguing to find the ancient divine epithet šōkānî šāneh, the "one dwelling in the bush," in Deuteronomy 33:16. With all this in mind, it seems a stronger argument can be made that it is the bush, and not the fiery mal'ak yhwh that mediates Yahweh's presence. Yahweh sends the fire, or at least causes the fire to appear, but does not embody him.

V. Conclusions

The images of fire presented in this chapter show a move from symbolic language to substantial independence. In these passages, Yahweh remains in the distance and the fire is the subject that acts. First, in 2 Samuel 22 // Psalm 18 and Ezekiel 1, the fire that goes out from Yahweh has its origin in the fire that accompanies and surrounds him. This contrasts with Genesis 19:24, in which Yahweh himself "overthrows" the cities on the plain. In Exodus 9:23-24, Yahweh sends hail against Egypt, but the fire tihallak, "goes forth," implying that was a self-motivated force. In 1 Kings 18:38 and Leviticus 9:24, Yahweh does not even appear on the scene. The fire is his representative that consumes the sacrifice and provides a focus for the Israelite confession of faith. In 1 Kings 19:11-

\textsuperscript{408} One could argue that, elsewhere in the JE narrative of Exodus (e.g. Exodus 19:18), the appearance of Yahweh himself is fiery, and thus the fire here embodies Yahweh, but caution is required. As long as the unity of the JE narrative remains an open question, one ought to rely only on the evidence that is internal to the narrative.
12. Yahweh is likewise "not in the fire." The wind, earthquake, and fire here are traditional storm motifs that go before him in procession.

In 2 Kings 1:9-16, fire from heaven protects Elijah from attempts to bring him before the king. Chariots of fire show how objects and beings that reside in the divine environment long enough will reflect or radiate the fire of Yahweh's presence. The *lappîd ṑēš* of Genesis 15 enacts a symbolic Yahwistic procession in a covenant ritual. The *lappîd ṑēš* relates to the *tannûr* in ways reminiscent of fiery vanguards in Psalm 50 and 97. The *šərāpîm* have a similar role in their own background, related as they are to Egyptian *wadjet* cobra guardians. Finally, in Exodus 3:2, the fiery *mal’ak yhwh* draws Moses to the bush from which Yahweh speaks.

This line-up of images demonstrates that fire and objects of fire can represent Yahweh's active presence at a distance. It is not clear at this point in the analysis, however, whether any of these images of preternatural fire represent the active divine presence taking on an identity of its own. What these passages clearly reveal is a belief that Yahweh's fire is separable from him, and can act at a distance on his behalf in elemental form or as an object or being. The separation is at most partial. Unlike Yahweh's *‘ap*, which could become completely independent from him on occasion, "sent" fire, although distinct from Yahweh and functioning at a distance from him, remains completely under the control of the divine will.
CHAPTER 5

FIRE IN WORSHIP

I. Introduction

The narratives analyzed in Chapter 5 contain examples of fire in the cult. While such fire often displays preternatural characteristics, it never clearly embodies Yahweh. For example, words describing Yahweh's fire in one instance are a compound synecdoche for the Jerusalem temple, but they do not refer to Yahweh's localized presence in the temple. In other narratives, descriptions of preternatural fire indicate Yahweh's presence mediated through a *mal’ak yhwh* or in the *kəbôd yhwh*. In still other narratives, a preternatural fire sent out from Yahweh serves as an intermediary, consuming offerings dedicated to Yahweh. Finally, cultic narratives show preternatural fire protecting a cult site. Cultic fire thus points to a localized presence of Yahweh, and may even interact with him, but does not seem to be an embodiment of him or an extension of an embodying divine fire.

II. Cultic Fire Indicating Yahweh's Nearby Presence

*A. Isaiah 31:9*

A reference to fire in Zion/Jerusalem in Isaiah 31:9 connects the cultic fire of the Jerusalem temple to Yahweh's presence. It does not, however, locate Yahweh's presence in that fire. Instead, the fiery *'ûr* and *tannûr* point to Yahweh's nearby presence.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wəsal ʻō mimmāgōr yaʻābōr} \\
\text{wəḥattū minnēs sārāyw} \\
\text{nəʻum yhwh} \\
\text{ʻāšer- ʻûr lō bəšīyyōn} \\
\text{wətannûr lō bīrūšālāîm}
\end{align*}
\]
His (Assyria's) rock will pass away from terror,  
and his officers will desert from the standard from panic,  
says Yahweh,  
whose fire is in Zion  
and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

The 'ûr and tannûr are likely an oblique reference to the cultic fire that indicates Yahweh's presence in the Jerusalem temple. Among the commentators who discuss the meaning of these images, most speak little of the fire itself, viewing it as a symbol for some other reality, usually covenantal or military.409 Several agree that the image is a military one, and foretells a divine protection of Jerusalem. The mention of Assyria in Isaiah 31:8 leads Wildberger to date Isaiah 31:9 from the time of the Assyrian domination of Judah.410 Wildberger emphasizes that the 'ûr and tannûr are "domestic" fires: the 'ûr is a lamp or hearth, and the tannûr is an oven.411 Wildberger believes that, in the religious imagination of the prophetic author, these "domestic" fires symbolize Yahweh's presence in his temple (lit. his "house") in Jerusalem. Wildberger also argues that they will supply the destructive force that Yahweh will unleash on those who attack his home.412 The 'ûr and tannûr symbolize the presence of Yahweh in the temple, and they will provide the destructive force necessary to turn back Assyria.


410 Wildberger, Isaiah 28-39, 221.

411 Wildberger, Isaiah 28-39, 228.

412 "It is not without danger when an enemy attacks Zion, where Yahweh has a fire and an oven (cf. also 50:11). The fire at the residence of Yahweh consumes those who attack it, or else his enemies can fall at
The 'ûr and tannûr are therefore not fires that embody Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem, but rather a compound synecdoche for the temple, which itself symbolizes Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem. Although the 'ûr and tannûr in this passage point to Yahweh's presence in Jerusalem, they do not themselves embody it. Rather, they are indicators that point to the divine presence in Yahweh's temple (lit. his "house") in Jerusalem.

B. Judges
1.) Judges 6:19-24

Two narratives from Judges also include images of preternatural cultic fire that indicates the divine presence in some way. In the first, from the Gideon narrative (Judges 6:21-24), Yahweh's presence is revealed when the mal’ak yhwh draws fire from a rock to consume a sacrifice for Yahweh:

The mal’ak yhwh extended the tip of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the meat and the unleavened bread. Fire came up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the mal’ak yhwh vanished from his sight. Gideon saw that it was the mal’ak yhwh and he said, "O Yahweh my lord! I have just seen the mal’ak yhwh face to face." Yahweh said to him, "Peace be with you. Do not be afraid: you will not

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the same time into a baking oven that has been lit. One can burn more than one's finger if one does not respect the place that Yahweh chose for himself." Wildberger, Isaiah 28-39, 228.
Gideon built there an altar to Yahweh. He called it, "Yahweh is peace." It remains to this day in Oprah of the Abiezrites.

It is not clear from the text what the relationship of this fire to Yahweh might be. Soggin argues that this fire from a rock is a parallel to the 'ēš-š-yhwh in 1 Kings 18:38. It is sent out by Yahweh to receive a sacrifice and inspire renewed faith. The differences between this passage and 1 Kings 18:38 outweigh the similarities, and make Soggin's suggestion hard to follow. In Judges 6:21, the fire comes from the rock, whereas in 1 Kings 18:38, the fire "falls," presumably from the sky, as LXX 1 Kings 18:38 states. In 1 Kings 18:38, the 'ēš-š-yhwh is the intermediary between Yahweh and the site of sacrifice. In Judges 6:21, the primary intermediary is the mal’ak yhwh, who after the fire appears is identified as the localized divine presence. The role of the fire in Judges 6:21 is to serve as a miraculous sign that confirms the word of the mal’ak yhwh and reveals to Gideon that Yahweh is present and active. That Yahweh is present in some way is clear from Gideon's response of fear. The fire reveals the true nature of the mal’ak-yhwh, and this leads Gideon to understand he has encountered Yahweh himself (an understanding also found in the story of Hagar in Genesis 16:7, 13, and Moses, in Exodus 3:2, 6). The preternatural fire that consumed Gideon's sacrifice reveals Yahweh's presence in the

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415 His expression of fear is an important indicator of Yahweh's localized presence; it follows the pattern of other "lethal God sightings," as Hendel calls them. Such sightings are recorded in the stories of Jacob (Genesis 32:31), Manoah (Judges 13:22), Moses (Exodus 33:20, and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5). Ron Hendel, "Aniconism and Anthropomorphism in Ancient Israel," *The Image and the Book: Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 220.
**mal’ak yhwh.** The fire itself does not seem to embody him or serve as his intermediary.416

2.) Judges 13:19-22

The second narrative comes from the announcement of the birth of Samson in Judges 13.

Manoah took the kid goats and the grain offering and offered them on the rock to Yahweh, "He Who Works Wonders,"417 while Manoah and his wife were looking on. When the flame of the altar went up to heaven, the mal’ak-yhwh went up in the flame of the altar, while Manoah and his wife were looking on. They fell on their faces to the ground. The mal’ak-yhwh did not appear again to Manoah and his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was the mal’ak-yhwh, and Manoah said to his wife, "We shall certainly die, for we have seen God!"

Manoah's fire is clearly not a "sent" fire (i.e. a fire sent from Yahweh to accomplish some purpose); he himself most likely kindled it. It is also not obviously a fire that embodies or accompanies Yahweh. And yet, the fire is a miraculous sign revealing that divinity is present in some fashion in the mal’ak-yhwh.

The fire in Judges 13:20 shows similarities and differences to the fire in Judges 6:21. It is a sacrificial fire on a rock, and the offering includes both meat and bread or

416 Judges 6:24 reflects other narratives in which the miraculous acceptance of a sacrifice initiates a cult site. Other examples are the miraculous consumption of David's sacrifice on the threshing floor of Ornan (1 Chronicles 21:28-30), the fiery cultic inauguration in Leviticus 9:24, and the descent of fire after Solomon's consecratory prayer in the new temple in 2 Chronicles 7:1-3. Not all such cult-initiatory miracles include a sacrifice or a fire. The shrine at Bethel, for example, marks the site of a visionary dream (Genesis 28:10-22).

417 Following the proposed reading in BHS, wəhû’ ṭapli’ as opposed to MT's úmapli’.
grain sacrifices. It is offered in the presence of the *mal’ak-yhwh*, whose divine identity is revealed through a wonder effected during the sacrificial offering. Upon seeing the wonder, the onlookers experience fear at having an encounter with Yahweh. In both cases, the fiery wonder confirms the messenger's word that Yahweh is at work. Boling, Schneider, and Webb all note the similarities in the narrative structure of Gideon's and Manoah's sacrifices.\(^{418}\)

Several differences also appear in comparison. Though the text does not state it explicitly, in Judges 13:19 the fire was most likely kindled by Manoah. In Judges 6:21, the *mal’ak-yhwh* miraculously kindles the fire. In Judges 13:21, the *mal’ak-yhwh* vanishes from sight and no further divine speech occurs. In Judges 6:21, the *mal’ak-yhwh* also disappears, yet Gideon continues to receive divine locutions. Finally, the ṣūr, "rock," on which Gideon offers his sacrifice becomes a public altar (Judges 6:24), whereas no mention is made of further worship on Manoah's ṣūr.

The most noteworthy difference in Judges 13:20 is that the *mal’ak-yhwh* ascends to heaven in the flame of the fire. The cultic fire in this episode plays the role of a conduit, reminiscent of Milgrom's comparison of the cultic fire in Leviticus to a gate.\(^{419}\) The transit of the *mal’ak-yhwh* and the fire "heavenward" shows this conduit in action. The *mal’ak-yhwh* exits the human realm via the flame on the altar. As the next section will show, priestly writers understood the cultic fire to transform the sacrifices burnt there into a *rēah-nīḥōah*, "a pleasing scent," that also ascends up to Yahweh in heaven. The


fire described in these passages from Judges cannot be said to embody Yahweh. It serves to indicate his nearby presence and it facilitates the making of an offering to him.

C. Leviticus
1. Sacrificial Burning

The book of Leviticus contains several different traditions about cultic fire. The traditions treated in this section are those that associate fire with Yahweh's participation in the cult. The next section treats traditions of fire indicating Yahweh's perpetual presence in the temple. The final section treats passages that portray the temple fire as a lethal cultic protector.

This first section treats the texts of Leviticus that describe the burning of offerings as the means by which sacrifice to Yahweh was accomplished. Several studies by Christian Eberhart have challenged the widely held notion that slaughter is the climactic act in rituals of sacrificial offering.420 Eberhart reviewed all the instances of Levitical qorbān offerings and noted that slaughter is a preparation ritual for some but not all of them. The minḥā, for example, is a grain sacrifice that requires no slaughter (Leviticus 2:1-16), yet it is as much a qorbān as the 'ōlā and šəlāmîm offerings (Leviticus 1:1-17; 3:1-17), because it is turned by fire into a rêah nīḥōah for Yahweh. Burning is thus the single event that unites all these rituals under the heading of qorbān.421 The act of

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burning, according to Eberhart, transformed the offerings into a _rēaḥ nīḥōah_, "a pleasing scent," for Yahweh. Elsewhere, narratives suggested that fire was a phenomenon that could exist in both the divine and human realms (pg. 149). Such an understanding could explain the use of fire in the cult. Milgrom above (pg. 176) described the sacrificial fire as a "gate," a point of connection between the divine and human realms. As the next chapter will discuss, certain qualities of fire allowed religious thinkers to consider it to be partially or temporarily "divine" under certain circumstances. The ability of fire to shift from "human" to "divine" categories likely was the feature that gave it its gate-like qualities in the cult, and made the act of burning the important feature in transforming a _qorbān_ offering into a something Yahweh could receive.

In each case, the _rēaḥ nīḥōah_ represented Yahweh's share in a sacrificial meal. Although the `ōlā was Yahweh's alone, the other _qorbān_ offerings were shared ritual meals. Yahweh received his portion of the meal (or the entire meal, in the case of the `ōlā) as a _rēaḥ-nīḥōah_ (Leviticus 1:9, 13, 17; 2:2, 9, 12; 3:5, 16). The smoke itself is the offering; the fire, which could exist in both the divine and human realms, transformed Yahweh's portion of the meal into an offering he could receive.

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422 Eberhart includes the _iššat_ sacrifice in his list, and believes it indicates a fire offering. A strong argument against such a notion appears in Jacob Hoftijzer, "Das sogenannte Feueropfer," in Hebräische Wortforschung: Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag von Walter Baumgartner (ed. G.W. Anderson and P.A.H. de Boer, et al.; Vetus Testamentum Supplements 16; Leiden: Brill, 1967) 114-134. Regarding the meaning of _rēaḥ-nīḥōah_, Baruch Levine agrees with Eberhart that the author of Leviticus imagined the soothing scent to be Yahweh's portion of the sacrifice (Leviticus: Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation [JPS Torah Commentary; Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 8). Milgrom understands more complexity to the tradition. Although such an anthropomorphic claim might have been an early part of the cultic incineration tradition, Milgrom argues that such a belief was lost by the time of the translation of the LXX (Leviticus 1-16, 162-163).

423 See Baruch Levine (Leviticus: Traditional Hebrew Text with the New JPS Translation [JPS Torah Commentary; Jewish Publication Society, 1989]), 15, for a discussion of offerings as ritual meals.
A distinction thus exists between the role of fire in these Levitical offerings and the ones mentioned in Judges 6:21-24 and 13:19-22. In the narratives, from Judges, the fire revealed Yahweh's active presence, working to change the outcome of history at a particularly difficult time for Israel. In Leviticus, by contrast, Yahweh's presence in the sacrificial offering is almost taken for granted; as long as the properties of the fire connect the divine and heavenly realms, Yahweh will be able to receive the réah nîhôah. The cultic fire in Leviticus thus is less an indication of Yahweh's presence and more a transforming agent that allows him to participate in the cult.

2.) Leviticus 6:5-6 (Eng. 6:12-13)

The book of Leviticus also contains a very explicit reference to the tradition of a perpetual cultic fire, a tradition that distantly reflects the môqêdê 'ôlām of the

Tempeleinlassliturgien in Isaiah 33:14 (see above, pgs. 113-116).

wəhāʾēš ’al-hammizbeaḥ tuqad-bō lô’ tikbeh ūbiʾēr ’ālēhā hakkōhēn ’ēsim babbōger babbōger waʾārak ’ālēhā hāʾōlā wəhiqtir ’ālēhā ḫelbê haššəlāmîm ’ēš tāmîd tuqad ’al-hammizbeaḥ lô’ tikbeh

The fire on the altar shall be kept burning, it shall not go out. Every morning the priest will burn wood on it and arrange the ’ōlā offering on it, and he will turn to smoke on it the fat of the šəlāmîm sacrifice. A continuous fire shall be kept burning on the altar; it shall not go out.

Isaiah 33:14 speaks of an môqêdê ’ōlām, "eternal hearths," whereas Leviticus 6:6 speaks of an ’ēš tāmîd, "perpetual fire." Both speak of a fire that is never extinguished, but the use of ’ōlām in Isaiah and tāmîd in Leviticus give the images different nuances. In Isaiah's language, the hearth is eternal because it indicates the presence of Yahweh in his temple. As Yahweh is eternal, so is the hearth in Jerusalem and the fire on it. The

language in Leviticus seems instead to emphasize the human response to Yahweh's eternal presence. The word tāmīd is best translated as "continuous," and the description of a "continuous fire" in the Jerusalem temple seems to emphasize the priestly activity that continuously took place in the temple day and night.

Several scholars note the practical nature of the 'ēš tāmīd legislation. Gersternberger, for example, believes the legislation exists to ensure the complete consumption of the 'ōlā.425 Balentine believes the 'ēš tāmīd legislation ensures an adequate supply chain to maintain the perpetual 'ōlā sacrifice.426 Other scholars emphasize the religious aspects of the legislation. Levine, for example, believes the 'ēš tāmīd represented Israel's attendance on God by night and day.427 Morgenstern argues that the 'ēš tāmīd serves as an indicator of the eternally enthroned and cultically dangerous kōbōd-yhwh in the sanctuary.428 In Morgenstern's mind, the 'ēš tāmīd plays the same role in the temple that the miraculous 'ēš did in Judges 6:21 and 13:20. It indicates Yahweh's nearby presence, but does not embody that presence itself. Milgrom and Balentine both tie the 'ēš tāmīd legislation to the belief, recorded in Leviticus 9:24 (discussed further below, pgs. 181-182), that the fire on the altar included a divine element sent by Yahweh.429 The 'ēš tāmīd keeps the divine element perpetually present and active in the temple. It is hard to follow their argument, however. Descriptions of


426 Balentine, Leviticus, 64-65.

427 Levine, Leviticus, 36.


the divine presence in Leviticus locate it in the form of the kəḇōd-yhwh, which resided in
the dābîr of the temple. The fire that resides on the altar might have a divine source and a
continuing preternatural quality, but no passage in Leviticus equates the altar fire with
Yahweh. In Levitical understanding, that role is played by the kəḇōd-yhwh.

III. Cultic Fire as "Sent" Fire

Several instances of cultic fire reflect motifs also found in the "sent" fire narrative
of Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:34). These motifs include Yahweh's
response to a priestly action (a blessing or a call upon Yahweh), the appearance of
preternatural fire that consumes the offering, and the prostration and worship of the
assembled Israelites. These motifs are especially apparent in Leviticus 9:23-24, 1

A. Leviticus 9:23-24

The central text for "sent" cultic fire is Leviticus 9:23-24.

wayyāḇō’ mōšeh wə’āhārôn 'el-’ōhel mō’ēd wayyīṣə ’ū wayəḇārākû ’et-
ḥā’ām wayyērā’ kəḇōd-yhwh ’el-kol-hā’ām wattēṣē’ ’ēṣ millipnē yhwh
wattōkal ’al-hammizbēqāh ’et-hā’ōlā wə’et-ḥaḥālābīm wayyar’ kol-hā’ām
wayyārōnnū wayyippəlū ’al-ḥōnēhem

Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and then they came out
and blessed the people. The kəḇōd-yhwh appeared to all the people, and
fire went out from before Yahweh and consumed the burnt offering and
the fat that was on the altar. All the people saw, and they cried out and
fell on their faces.

Noth and Balentine argue that the purpose of this narrative is to emphasize Yahweh's
acceptance of the priesthood and the cult. The "dramatic and miraculous" reception of
the offering validates all the rituals of preparation and ordination detailed in the
preceeding chapters of Leviticus.\textsuperscript{430} It also parallels traditions of "dramatic and miraculous" cultic receptions found in Judges 6:21 and 13:20.

Milgrom and Levine look instead at the religious imagination at work in this passage. In their understanding, this passage from Leviticus includes a claim that the fire of the altar includes a divine element, which is kept in place by the 'ēš tāmîd. Both Milgrom and Levine draw on Weinfeld's hypothesis that the ḫâḇôd yhwh was a "cloud-encased fire." The fire on the altar, therefore, is mingled with a fiery emanation of the divine embodiment in the ḫâḇôd yhwh.\textsuperscript{431} The altar fire, they argue, thus provides a manifestation of the divine presence.

As in the discussion of the 'ēš tāmîd, such claims of divine cultic fire are problematic. The strongest argument against such claims comes from Aster's demonstration that the ḫâḇôd yhwh is not a consistently fiery phenomenon. Leviticus 9:23-24 contains no evidence that the ḫâḇôd yhwh is fiery. This does not change the argument, however, that the fire has a supernatural character. The fire comes millîpnê yhwh, "from before Yahweh." Although this does not give evidence for the type of divine "fragment" that Sommer speaks of, or even of a localized divine embodiment (as one finds in Deuteronomy 4:12), one can argue that this fire is a preternatural "sent" fire, similar to 'ēš-yhwh in 1 Kings 18:38, which came forth to consume the offerings. It is this preternatural fire, which serves as an intermediary to Yahweh, that the 'ēš tāmîd, kept alight on the altar.


\textsuperscript{431} Levine, \textit{Leviticus}, 58. Milgrom, \textit{Leviticus 1-16}, 589-590. See, however, the discussion in chapter 3 (pgs. 72-88) for the problematic nature of Weinfeld's description of the ḫâḇôd-yhwh as a "cloud-encased fire."
B. 1 Chronicles 21:26 and 2 Chronicles 7:1-3

If the purpose of Leviticus 9:24 was to indicate that the 'ēš tāmīd kept a preternatural intermediary enkindled on the altar, then one faced a problem. The pentateuchal narratives give no indication that the cult fire of Leviticus 9:24 was preserved during the wilderness journeys. Morgenstern noted the lack of any provision in Numbers 4:1-16 (or anywhere else in the pentateuchal wilderness narratives) for the maintenance of the fire during Israel's travels in the desert.432 This perceived lack may be the inspiration for two Persian-period narratives that describe similar fiery cultic theophanies at the Jerusalem shrine. These passages provide assurance that the 'ēš tāmīd in the Jerusalem temple was in fact initiated by Yahweh. These narratives appear in 1-2 Chronicles, and neither instance of the Chronicler's "sent" fire appears in the parallel passage from 2 Samuel and 1 Kings.

The first passage is 1 Chronicles 21:26 (cf. 2 Samuel 24:25):

wayyiben šām dāwīd mīzḇēḥ layhwya'al 'ōlōt ūšālāmīm wayyiqrā'
'el-yhwlayyā'ānēhū bā'ēš mīn-haššāmāyim 'al mizbāh hā'ōlā

David built there an altar to Yahweh, and he offered up a burnt offering and peace offerings. He called upon Yahweh, and he answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of the burnt offering.

The second passage appears in 2 Chronicles 7:1-3 (cf. 1 Kings 8:10-11)

ūkəkallōt šālōmōḥ ləḥitpallēl wōḥā'ēš yārōdā mēḥaššāmāyim watta'kal hā'ōlā wōḥazzəḇāḥīm ūkəbōd-yhw'h mālē' 'et-habbat ywolō yākəlū hakkōhānīm lābō' 'el-bēt yhw'h kī-mālē' kəbōd-yhw'h 'et-bēt yhw'h wəkōl bonē yisrā'ēl rō'īm bəredet hā'ēš ūkəbōd-yhw'h 'al-habba'üt wayyikrō'ū 'appayim 'arṣā 'al-hārîṣpâ wayyistiẖəwū wəhōdōt layhw'h kī tōb kī lə'ōlām hasdō

432 Morgenstern, Fire, 3-4.
When Solomon had finished praying, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the 'ōlā and the sacrifices. The kōḇōḏ-yhwh filled the temple, and the priests were not able to go into the temple of Yahweh because the kōḇōḏ-yhwh was in the temple. All the Israelites were looking on when the fire and the kōḇōḏ-yhwh came down upon the temple. They bowed down their faces to the ground onto the pavement, and they prostrated themselves, giving thanks to Yahweh, "For he is good, and his loving-kindness is forever."

Commentators emphasize two things about these passages. First, the miraculous consumption of an inaugural sacrifice connects Solomon's temple and the Jerusalem cult to the pentateuchal wilderness shrine described in Leviticus. Second, the appearance of preternatural fire signifies Yahweh's acceptance of Jerusalem as his cult site. These two passages appear in a text that took its current form after the return from exile in the late sixth century BCE, when whatever 'ēš tāmīḏ that might have been in the pre-exilic temple had long been extinguished. Interest by post-exilic writers in the pre-exilic cultic fire reveals its importance in their religious imagination. In these passages from Chronicles, the fire represented Yahweh's acceptance of David's cult and Solomon's shrine in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the holy place in which Yahweh heard prayers and answered in fire. In the post-exilic period, the city, once holy and then desecrated, was again the cultic site at which Yahweh interacted with his people. Although no Hebrew text preserves a "fiery cultic inauguration" in the post-exilic temple, the emphasis placed on the fire in these texts, coupled with the legislation of the 'ēš tāmīḏ from Leviticus 6:5-6, indicates that the altar fire served as a point of continuity between the rebuilt temple


and its predecessors in Jerusalem and in the wilderness.\textsuperscript{435} The "sent" fire of the Jerusalem temple, described in these passages from 1 and 2 Chronicles, indicated Yahweh's continuing participation in the Jerusalem cult.

These passages show narrative affinities to 1 Kings 18:38, and it is important to remember that in that passage, Yahweh is distinct from the fire. In these passages too, the fire remains distinct from Yahweh or the \emph{kabôd-yhw}h. The fire itself does not embody the divine presence, but rather comes forth from it. In the temple, as in 1 Kings 18:38, its primary role was to serve as an intermediary agent for the consumption of offerings dedicated to Yahweh. It also remained on the altar as a continuous sign of Yahweh's presence in the temple. As in 1 Kings 18:38, however, the fire did not embody that presence itself.

\section*{IV. Lethal Cultic Fire}

Preternatural fire also plays a role in protecting the cult site from profanation. Two passages contain evidence of this tradition. Leviticus 10:1-3 describes the death of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu at the hands of protective fire, and in Numbers 16:18, 35, two-hundred fifty Israelites meet a fiery death when they rebel against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

\textit{Leviticus 10:1-3 and Numbers 16:18, 35}

\begin{quote}
\texttt{wayyiq\textsuperscript{h}u\textsuperscript{436} ṣônê-\textsuperscript{‘}ahârôn nădâb wa\textsuperscript{‘}ābīhû\textsuperscript{‘} iṣ maḥṭātō wayýt\textsuperscript{t}ōnū bāhēn \textsuperscript{‘}ēṣ wayyāśīmū \‘}ālēhâ qēṭōret wayyaqrībū lipnê yhwh \‘}ēṣ zārā \‘}āser lô'
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{436} Levine dates certain legislation in Leviticus to the post-exilic period (\textit{Leviticus}, xxviii-xxx). The interest that Persian-era Chronicles shows in the fiery cultic inauguration may suggest that Leviticus 9:24 dates from the same period. Regarding the otherwise unknown "fiery cultic inauguration" of the post-exilic temple, 2 Maccabees 1:19-22 preserves a Hellenistic-era tale that the fire miraculously survived the exile in the form of an inflammable liquid.
Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his fire-pan, put fire in it, placed incense on it, and offered before Yahweh an illicit fire that he did not command of them. Fire went out from before Yahweh and consumed them, and they died before Yahweh.

A similar narrative appears in Numbers 16:18, 35. In this case, the fire comes mē’ēt yhwh, i.e. directly from Yahweh himself:

wayyiqhû 'îš maḥtāṭō wayyittānû 'āléhem 'ēš wayyāsîmû 'āléhem qəṭōret wayya'amadû petah 'ōhel mō 'ēd ûmōšeh wē'ahārôn...
we’ēš yāsèh'mē’ēt yhwh wattōkal ’ēt haḥāmiššîm ʿūmā‘tayim ’īs maqrîbê haqqoṭōret

Each took his fire pan, placed fire in it, and set incense on it, and stood at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, as did Moses and Aaron...
Fire came out from Yahweh and consumed the two hundred fifty men offering incense.

In these latter passages from Numbers, the fire resembles the "sent" fire in Genesis 19:24, which also comes mē’ēt yhwh. While the destruction in Genesis is attributed directly to Yahweh, the destruction in Numbers is the work of the 'ēš itself. In both cases, the 'ēš is a tool of divine punishment sent directly from Yahweh.

Both passages seem to be rooted in the memory of an intramural conflict within the priesthood, but nuances indicate that different religious imaginations are at work. To begin with, the sins are different. In the biblical text itself, the crime of Korah and his followers was a rebellion against Moses and Aaron's religious leadership (Numbers 16:3)

436 The verb lqḥ in the prefixal stem functions like a 1-n, leading one to expect wayyiqqāḥû here. In forms that take a penultimate schwa, some 1-n verbs show variant spellings that lack both the schwa and the doubling one would expect from the assimilation of the n. In Genesis 35:16, for example, one finds the 3 m.p. of ns’ spelled wayyis’û instead of the expected wayyissa’û. Examples of the verb lqḥ functioning in the same manner appear in Exodus 12:3 (wayyiqhû), Exodus 25:2 (wayyiqhû-li), and 1 Samuel 4:3 (niqūhà).

437 For more on the conflict see Milgrom, Leviticus 1-16, 628-633, and Baruch Levine, Numbers 1-20 (Anchor Bible Commentary; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 428-432.
and sacrilegious approach before Yahweh (Numbers 17:5 [Eng. 16:40]). In Leviticus 10, the crime is the sacrilegious offering of the 'ēš zārâ. What exactly rendered the fire to be zārâ (foreign, strange) is not entirely clear. The narrative itself implies that they did not light the incense from an altar coal, as the high priest is instructed to do in Leviticus 16:12. Thus the fire they brought before Yahweh was "foreign" to the 'ēš that Yahweh had provided for the cult, as well as "foreign" to the instruction Yahweh had provided for approach before his presence.

The second difference between these two passages appears in the provenance of the fire. In Numbers 16:35, the 'ēš comes mē’ēt yhwh, "from Yahweh." The phrase mē’ēt yhwh also appears in the overthrow of the cities on the plain in Genesis 19:25. By contrast, the 'ēš in Leviticus 10:2 goes out millipnê yhwh, "from before Yahweh," a phrase that also describes the fire in Leviticus 9:24. The difference between mē’ēt yhwh and millipnê yhwh is subtle but significant. In Genesis 19:24, the fire that comes mē’ēt yhwh is a depersonalized force or weapon. The overthrow of the cities is attributed directly to Yahweh. In Numbers 16:35, the destruction is attributed to the fire, as

438 Balentine, Leviticus, 84, gives bibliography of the studies on this topic. Levine and Milgrom follow the rabbinic teaching that Nadab and Abihu committed multiple sins by profaning the sanctuary with a non-mandated incense offering, by using improper incense, and by using fire that had not come from the altar (Levine, Leviticus, 58-59; Milgrom, Leviticus, 633-634).

439 A detail in Numbers 17:2 (Eng. 16:37) reveals that the fire from Yahweh does not maintain its preternatural characteristics very long. Although it comes mē’ēt yhwh, after it has fulfilled its task, it is enough like natural fire that it can be extinguished. Yahweh tells Moses, according to the MT, ’ēmōr ’el-’ēl āzār ben-‘ahārōn hakkōhēn wayārēm ’et-hammahōt nibbēn haššārēpā wa’et-ha’ēš zārēh-hālō’a ki qādēšā, "Tell Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, to remove the fire-pans from within the blaze and to scatter the fire widely, for they [the fire-pans] are holy". Scattering the fire presumably made it die down to such an extent that the metal objects in it could be retrieved. Although the fire had a divine source, it could die out like a natural fire (see also the concerns that the tamid fire not die out in Leviticus 6:6). Such passages indicate that the line separating "natural" from "preternatural" fire was not always sharply drawn. Victor Morla Asensio, in his Fuego en el Antiguo Testamento: Estudio de Semántica Lingüística (Valencia-Bilbao: Institución San Jerónimo, 1988), 267, in fact, noted that images of fire in the Hebrew bible show a "monotony" of characteristics (see pgs. 12-13). Perhaps one could also say that fire's ethereal qualities give it "otherworldy" characteristics even in its natural state. Those ethereal qualities will sometimes make it difficult to determine whether an image is natural or preternatural.
indicated by the feminine tōkal. At the same time, the use of mēʾēt yhwh to describe the source of the fire suggests a depersonalized force or weapon as in Genesis 19:25. The phrase millipnē yhwh, on the other hand, is often used for spirits, beings, or people. Royal officials go out millipnē a king (Genesis 41:46, Esther 8:15). Visitors to a powerful individual depart millipnē the individual (Genesis 47:10, Exodus 35:20). The "lying spirit" in 1 Kings 22:21 approaches lipnē yhwh before departing to entice Ahab. Cain and Jonah remove themselves millipnē yhwh (Genesis 4:16, Jonah 1:3, 10). Divine wrath, qeṣef, goes out millipnē yhwh in Numbers 17:11 (Eng. 16:46) and in 2 Chronicles 19:2. In Numbers 17:11 (Eng. 16:46), this wrath from "before Yahweh" takes the form of a plague, and halts when Aaron takes appropriate cultic action. Such traditions indicate that the phrase millipnē yhwh follows a literary pattern found not with weapons or an abstract powers, but rather with beings, officials, and spirits. In Leviticus 10:2, ēš goes forth "from before Yahweh," like an official dispatched to accomplish its master's will.

The fire that goes out millipnē yhwh in Leviticus 10:2 has affinities with the ēš-lopânāw of Psalm 50:3 and the ēš lopânāw of Psalm 97:3. In those psalms (discussed above, pgs. 160-163), the ēš went before Yahweh to annihilate his enemies. An ēš that protects the cult site also has affinities to the šərāpîm of Isaiah 6:6-7. They protect the cult site by purifying Isaiah's lips with a coal drawn from the altar. The purification of Isaiah by the šərāpîm is a positive contrast to the event that ended with the death of Nadab and Abihu.

The ēš of Leviticus 10:2 is also reminiscent of the ṣap-yhwh that slew Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6:7. In both cases, the punishment came as a response to a failure of ritual
precaution. Nadab and Abihu approached the divine presence with a fire not drawn from the sacred fire sent by Yahweh in Leviticus 9:24. Uzzah touched the ark to steady it without the necessary cultic preparations for such an approach. The \textit{\'ēs millipnē yhwh} serves as the agent of divine lethality in Leviticus 10:2 just as the \textit{\'ap-yhwh} does in 2 Samuel 6:7.\footnote{If one follows Hendel's rationale, the \textit{lahaṭ haḥereb hammithappeket} in Genesis 3:24, is yet another agent of divine lethality, guarding the way to the tree of life, itself an probable analogue of the Jerusalem temple.\footnote{As mentioned in Chapter 1, Ron Hendel argued that the \textit{lahaṭ haḥereb hammithappeket} was a heavenly being, "Flame-of-the-whirling-sword," whose name parallels other northwest Semitic deities like "Reshep-of-the-arrow." Lawrence Stager argues for an identification between the Jerusalem Temple and Eden in "Jerusalem and the Garden of Eden," \textit{Eretz-Israel} 26 (1999), 183-194.}}

The \textit{\'ēs} of Leviticus 10:2 is part of this tradition of fiery cultic protectors. To bring a foreign fire into the presence of Yahweh triggered the protective action of the \textit{\'ēs}. Whereas in Leviticus 9:24, \textit{\'ēs} first arrives \textit{millipnē yhwh} to consume the sacrifice and to reveal the divine presence, in Leviticus 10:2-3, \textit{\'ēs} arrives \textit{millipnē yhwh} to protect the cult site and reveal Yahweh's holiness and glory. In both cases, the fire is an intermediary that acts on Yahweh's behalf in the cult.

\textbf{V. Conclusion}

Descriptions of cultic fire include both "natural" and preternatural fires. A "natural" cultic fire was kindled by Aaron and was already consuming portions of the offerings before the preternatural \textit{\'ēs millipnē yhwh} came forth to consume the \textit{\'ōlâ} offering. Preternatural cultic fire also indicates Yahweh's nearby presence at the site of offering, and it protects the cult site from profanation. Such preternatural cultic fire

appears specifically in Leviticus, in the Deuteronomistic history (Judges 6:21, 13:20; 1 Kings 18:38), and in the Isaianic tradition (Isaiah 31:9).

The primary purpose of the altar fire was to consume offerings. Through the agency of the altar fire, priests transformed sacrificial offerings into the réah nîhôôah that Yahweh savored. A strand of tradition in Leviticus (Leviticus 6:5-6 [Eng. 6:12-13]; Leviticus 9:24) indicates that priests were able to do this because the fire on the altar had a preternatural aspect. Yahweh's 'ēš remained on the altar in the matrix of the 'ēš tamîd, and through its preternatural agency, offerings were passed to Yahweh in the form of the réah nîhôôah. The fire came from Yahweh and worked on his behalf, but was not Yahweh per se.

In fact, no text indicates that Yahweh inhabits the altar fire. In Isaiah 31:9, the 'ûr and tannûr represent a compound synecdoche that describes the Yahweh's residence in Jerusalem. The text does not state that Yahweh resides in the fire, or that the fire makes him present. In other narratives, the fire accompanies the presence of a mediator, but the fire never serves that role itself. This is the case in Judges 6:21 and 13:20, both of which locate Yahweh's presence in the mal’ak yhwh. This is also the case in Leviticus 9:24, and 2 Chronicles 7:13, which localize the divine presence in the kôbôd yhwh that appears simultaneously with the fire, and in 1 Chronicles 21:26, in which Yahweh sends the fire from heaven. This is also the case in Leviticus 10:1-3 and Numbers 16:18, 35. In both narratives, Yahweh is present in an unspecified way, and the protective fire comes from him, either millipnè yhwh (Leviticus 10:2) or mēʾēt yhwh (Numbers 16:35).

Preternatural cultic fire thus has all the qualities of a "sent" fire, working at a distance from Yahweh to accomplish the divine will. The preternatural qualities may be
transient, as in Numbers 16:35, in which the fire $mē'ēt\ yhwh$ is able to be extinguished. The preternatural qualities might exist primarily to call attention to the divine presence localized elsewhere, as in Judges 6:21 and 13:20 (similar to the role the fire played in Exodus 3:2). The preternatural qualities may also give the fire the appearance of a heavenly being, as one sees in Leviticus 9:24 and 10:2, when the fire goes out $millipnē\ yhwh$, like a guardian dispatched to protect the cult site. In none of these narratives, however, does the cult fire embody Yahweh. Instead, these narratives speak of preternatural cultic fire as a "sent" fire that indicates the nearby divine presence, serving as an intermediary agent that consumes offerings, but never itself embodying the divine presence. The cultic fire an active role in as much as it was a "devouring fire," that "ate" the sacrifices on the altar. In spite of this, and in spite of the fact that several cultic fires in the bible had Yahweh as their source, the clear distinction between Yahweh and the fire of the cult makes it unlikely that cultic fire was believed to be a hypostatization of the active divine presence.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS
I. Brief Review

This research project sought evidence for hypostatic fire by examining instances of preternatural fire in the Hebrew Bible. The introduction, contained in the first two chapters, detailed the parameters of the project and reviewed the history of scholarship on the topics of fire and hypostases. Reviewing this material in light of the textual data clarified that hypostases were understood to appear in two different modes. In narratives, they were substantivized divine qualities or attributes, especially abstract qualities and attributes. In the cult, these substantivized qualities or attributes served as intermediaries of the divine presence. Substantivization can result in a completely independent hypostatic identity, like the transformation McCarter finds in certain narratives of Yahweh's 'ap, "wrath" (pgs. 43-44). Substantivization can also result in a semi-independent hypostasis, as one finds in the hypostases mentioned at Elephantine, or in McCarter's analysis of Yahweh's 'āšērā (pgs. 39-43). Semi-independent hypostases function well as mediators because they have an "is-and-is-not" relationship with the deity, simultaneously appearing as a deity's attribute while also demonstrating a distinct identity. Semi-independent hypostases explain how a being that has existence in the heavenly realm can be an actor in human drama or in a geographically specific cult place. Something that simultaneously "is-and-is-not" the localized presence of a divine attribute is one way to answer this question.

The third chapter demonstrated that, in several narratives, fire was specifically used to embody Yahweh or indicate his localized presence. Some anthropomorphic
images of Yahweh include fire in and around his body. Other images eschew any anthropomorphic motifs and focus on preternatural phenomena (fire, cloud, thick darkness) drawn from storm images to indicate the divine presence. At times fire is the only phenomenon that indicates the divine presence. In each of these cases, fire accompanies the active divine presence. When fire appears, Yahweh is an actor in the narrative who has an effect on its outcome.

The fourth chapter analyzed narratives in which fire itself became the primary actor in the narrative. In several instances, the "sent" fire has Yahweh's fiery environment as its origin, although this is not always the case. In each case, however, it is the fire that acts in the narrative; Yahweh remains at a distance. Nonetheless, the fire always acts in accord with the divine will.

The fifth chapter concluded that, in descriptions of the cult, preternatural fire is a sign of Yahweh’s presence, but not an embodiment of it. The fire that receives sacrificial offerings also has a preternatural character. Moreover, preternatural fire can also serve as a protector of the cult site. By comparison, it is less like an embodying fire and more like Yahweh's fiery attendants in Psalms 50:3 and 97:2. Cultic fire is an intermediary agent or a sign that points to the divine presence.

II. A Gradient of Images

A. Gradient Categories

As stated in chapter 1, if one arranges images of preternatural fire on a gradient extending from "preternatural fire is Yahweh" at one end to "the preternatural fire is not Yahweh" on the other, then one can isolate those images, presumably near the center of
the gradient, in which preternatural fire "is-and-is-not" Yahweh. In this area of the gradient, where preternatural fire is both an attribute of Yahweh and also has an identity of its own, fire would fulfill the qualifications of a semi-independent hypostasis.

The idea for such a gradient comes from the work of Gebhard Selz, who uses a gradient of images to develop his study of divine kingship in Mesopotamia. His ideas also dovetail with the fluidity tradition of Benjamin Sommer, especially with the instances of "overlap." Both authors find that, in certain circumstances, divinity can be shared with a non-divine entity. An understanding of their work will help to investigate narratives in which preternatural fire "is-and-is-not" Yahweh.

1. Circumstantial Divinity and Divine Overlap

In his 2007 study of divine kingship, the Assyriologist Gebhard Selz argues that divinity can be shared in a gradient way with non-divine entities.442 He attributes this to two features of Mesopotamian thought: a belief that categories of being were hierarchical, and a tolerance for what he calls "fuzzy boundaries" among categories. In Selz's reconstruction of Mesopotamian royal ideology, kings can shift across these fuzzy boundaries from their primary category (human king) to a secondary one (divine being) whenever they function as or act in circumstances similar to a deity.

Among his examples, Selz uses the Stele of the Vultures to illustrate this point.443 According to Selz, it is unclear whether the stele depicts E'anatum or Ninīrsu. This ambiguity, he argues, is intentional; in the circumstances of his triumph, E'anatum has

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443 Selz, "Prototypes," 22
come to function as Ningirsu. In the hierarchical category "triumphator," Ningirsu
resides at the apex, and E'anatum occupies an outlying point. Shifting from the "human"
to "divine" category in such a way confers a "functional" or "circumstantial" divinity on
E'anatum.

According to Selz, a similar shift occurs when the king plays a divine role in the
Sacred Marriage rite. Selz argues that functional divinity and circumstantial divinity are more than
"metaphors," at least as the word is currently understood. They are more than figurative
language applied to a referent for poetic or dramatic effect. Metaphors used in ancient
texts were "statements of essentiality": the king had, under certain circumstances, entered
a different category of being. Non-divine entities can therefore "participate" in divinity
in a gradient way, i.e. to a greater or lesser extent, when their functions or circumstances
cause them to transgress the "fuzzy" boundary of the "divine" category, and to occupy a
position in the "divine" categorical hierarchy.

Selz's conclusions remind one of Benjamin Sommer's "fluidity tradition" (see pgs.
50-55). To reiterate Sommer's idea, one form of fluidity was divine "fragmentation," i.e.

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446 Selz, "Prototypes," 19. See also Propp's comments on the "transfer of identity" from a dispatcher to a
messenger (Propp, Exodus 1-18, 198). Propp's category shift is similar to the one described by Selz.
the appearance of a deity in multiple places. These fragments had their own identity, but at the same time maintained an underlying unity. Another form of divine fluidity was "overlap." A deity could "overlap" with other entities, as Yahweh did with malʾekîm and many deities did with cultic stones. These entities would then mediate the deity's presence in a certain place or time. The concept of "overlap," especially, fits with Selz's idea of a gradient. The circumstances and function of an entity can allow it to mediate a deity. Fuzzy boundaries among categories allow that mediation to be ontological. In divine "overlap," the entity does not just serve as a representation or symbol or metaphor for the deity, but actually becomes the deity to some degree, depending on function or circumstances.

An entity that demonstrates functional/circumstantial divinity or divine overlap is not necessarily a hypostasis. By definition, a hypostasis is a substantivized "attribute proper to God." This is not always the case in instances of circumstantial divinity or divine overlap. For example, deities did not need a "stony" attribute to a deity in order to take up residence in a cultic stele or massēbā. The stele itself did not represent or manifest "an attribute proper to God." When, however, an entity does represent such an attribute, and at the same time appears to be the recipient of divine "overlap" or "circumstantial divinity," one can argue that such an entity is a divine hypostasis. It is an attribute of the deity that has taken on an identity of its own, and yet still mediates the presence of the deity. It "is-and-is-not" the deity.

447 According to McCarter, "Aspects," 141, Yahweh-in-Hebron was not the same as Yahweh-in-Jerusalem (cf. 2 Samuel 15:7-8). See also Sommer, Bodies, 15.

448 Sommer, Bodies, 40-41.

449 To quote Oesterley and Box, Synagogue, 195.
Fire certainly can fulfill these requirements. This research project has shown that Yahweh appears with fiery attributes or is embodied by fire (e.g. Ezekiel 1:27; Deuteronomy 4:12). This research project has also shown that Yahweh sends out fire in narrative (e.g. Amos 1:4) and in cult (Leviticus 9:24). Reviewing the passages of this study in the light of Selz's and Sommer's insights, one can determine whether any of these images of preternatural fire include a fire sent out from Yahweh that undergoes what Sommer would understand to be a divine "overlap" or what Selz would recognize as "functional" or "circumstantial" divinity. It would be an image of a fire, sent out from Yahweh that took on an identity of its own even while it manifested the divine presence.

2. Points on the Gradient

The following list outlines the points on the gradient at which one finds the passages studied in the previous chapters. At one endpoint are narratives in which the preternatural fire is Yahweh. At the other endpoint are narratives in which the preternatural fire is not Yahweh. At the points between, one finds preternatural fire that is connected to Yahweh to a greater or lesser degree.

a.) The preternatural fire is Yahweh.

Within this category are two sub-categories. In the first, some or all of Yahweh's anthropomorphic body is fiery. Examples of this come in 2 Samuel 22:9 and Psalm 18:9, in which fire comes of Yahweh's mouth (see pgs. 63-68), or in Ezekiel 1:27 and 8:2 in which the divine body is filled with fire from the waist up, and is completely fiery from the waist down (see pgs. 68-72). One could also place Exodus 14:24 in this category;
Yahweh $\text{yaškēp}$, "looked down on," the Egyptians from the pillar of fire and cloud, which hints at some perceptible form taking form out of the fire (see pgs. 94). In these passages, the preternatural fire is Yahweh.

In the second sub-category, one finds the several instances of "non-anthropomorphic" preternatural fire discussed in chapter 3. In these passages, fire is the only indication of the localized divine presence. These images include both the P and non-P traditions of fire and cloud leading Israel through the wilderness, with the possible exception of Exodus 14:24 mentioned above (see pgs. 94). The Sinai theophanies recorded by J (Exodus 19:18) and P (Exodus 24:17) also fit into this category (see pgs. 89-93). In both of these passages, fire is the primary indication that Yahweh was present on the mountain. This motif becomes the primary, even sole, indication of divine presence in Deuteronomy 4:12, 15, 36, 5:22, 24, 9:10, and 10:4, in which Yahweh speaks $\text{mittōk hāʾēš}$, "from the midst of the fire" (see pgs. 103-111).

At this point on the gradient, one also finds the descriptions of Yahweh's presence as a fiery $\text{tannûr}$. Genesis 15:17 is clear: the $\text{tannûr}$ is Yahweh, whose presence is necessary for the covenant ceremony (see pgs. 154-160). In Isaiah 31:9, the cultic fire in the Jerusalem temple is a $\text{tannûr}$ that indicates Yahweh's presence there (see pgs. 157-159). This is reminiscent of the description of Yahweh's presence on Sinai as a $\text{kibšan}$ in Exodus 19:18. Although the nuances of the connection between Yahweh and his $\text{tannûr}$ is Isaiah 31:9 are not entirely clear, the text explicitly links the $\text{tannûr}$ and Yahweh. Such a link strengthens the argument that the $\text{tannûr}$ in Genesis 15:17 indicates the localized presence of Yahweh.

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450 Contra Benjamin Sommer, who would understand the $\text{kobōd yhwh}$ of Exodus 24:17 as a mention of an anthropomorphistic divine body (Sommer, Bodies, 60). Aster, meanwhile, implies that the radiant phenomena alone indicate the divine presence in Exodus 24:17 (Unbeatable Light, 301).
In this category, finally, one should include the passages that describe Yahweh as an 'ēš 'ōkolâ (Deuteronomy 4:24 and 9:3) or 'ēš 'ōkēlā (Isaiah 33:14; see pgs. 111-117). In these passages, "devouring fire" is a metaphor for Yahweh (in contrast to passages like Exodus 24:17, which indicate the relationship with a simile, "like a devouring fire"). Selz's claim that such metaphors are "statements of essentiality" that bespeak a shift across categorical boundaries sheds light on the claim that these "devouring fire" texts are making. Something about the way fire devours everything in its way allows it to "become" Yahweh when he is jealous (Deuteronomy 4:24), when he is at war (Deuteronomy 9:3), or when he is executing judgment (Isaiah 33:14).

b.) Yahweh sends a fire that takes on Yahweh's identity.

One image fits under this point, and that is the lappîd 'ēš in Genesis 15:17 (see pgs. 154-160). Although a tannûr is present to indicate the localized presence of Yahweh, it is the fiery lappîd 'ēš that actually performs the covenant ritual. No passage in scripture uses a lappîd 'ēš to describe the presence of Yahweh, but Ezekiel 1:13 does use the term for the appearance of fiery ministering spirits. The ministering spirit takes on Yahweh's identity as it performs the ritual, in a way similar to Propp's insight that the identity of a "dispatcher" can be transferred to a "messenger".451 It plays Yahweh's role in the covenant, and shares the fiery nature of the tannûr. To use Selz's language, the lappîd 'ēš demonstrates a "functional" divinity as it functions on Yahweh's behalf in the ritual. Looking at the passage from the perspective of Sommer's thesis, Yahweh had overlapped with the lappîd 'ēš, or perhaps better, the lappîd 'ēš was a "fragment" of Yahweh sent out from the tannûr as his representative. In each of these analyses, the

451 Propp, Exodus 1-18, 198-199.
lappid ḫēš bears Yahweh's presence and bears the fiery nature of Yahweh as a tannûr. It is a "sent" fire that, once sent out, takes on Yahweh's identity as it performs its mission.

c.) Yahweh is present and overlaps with a natural fire.

In two narratives, Yahweh transforms a natural fire into a preternatural one by interacting with it. In Leviticus 9:24, Yahweh sends out fire that mingles with a fire already burning on the altar. Leviticus 9:10, 13, 17, and 20 each mention a fire that Aaron had already kindled to consume the inaugural offerings of the cult (see pgs. 181-183). As this fire burns on the altar, the ḫōd-ṣîhwh appears to all the people (Leviticus 9:23) and immediately thereupon (Leviticus 9:24), the fire that had been consuming the sacrifices was mixed with preternatural fire sent from Yahweh. The original fire was not sent, but after the arrival of the ḫēš millîphî ṣîhwh, the fire on the altar receives a special character. Although this theological claim does not appear again in the Pentateuchal wilderness narrative, a similar claim does seem to be known by Isaiah (33:14), and likely influences the development of the tamîd fire tradition in Leviticus 6:5-6 (Eng. 6:12-13) (see pgs. 179-181).

Judges 13:19-20 presents another example of divine activity making a natural fire preternatural. The fire of offering, presumably kindled by Manoah, takes on a preternatural character when the mal'ak-ṣîhwh ascends into the heavens within it (see pgs. 175-177). The entrance of the mal'ak-ṣîhwh is what transforms the cultic fire. The text is not rich in detail, but it seems that the fire and the angel together ascend into the heavens. The text does not state that the preternatural fire embodies the divine presence. Instead, the miraculous transformation of the fire indicates to Manoah and his wife that their
visitor was a *mal’ak-yhwh* who bore the divine presence (Judges 13:21-22). The fire does not embody Yahweh, but it does accompany his presence. His interaction with it clearly moves it out of the category of human-kindled fire and into the category of "preternatural." Unlike the "overlapped" fire of Leviticus 9:24, however, nothing in the narrative indicates that this fire remains to serve as a continuous indication of the divine presence.

d.) *Yahweh sends fire and is present in another way.*

In four narratives, Yahweh's presence is manifest in something other than the preternatural fire of the passage, either in a *mal’ak yhwh* that the narrative explicitly identifies as Yahweh, or as the *kabôd yhwh*. In none of these cases is the locus of divine presence explicitly fiery. Preternatural fire, when it appears, is a "wonder" that points to Yahweh's presence, but it does not emanate from a "fiery" Yahweh.

The fire Moses encounters in Exodus 3:2 has this character (see pgs. 165-169). When Yahweh speaks to Moses, it is *mittôk hassôneh* and not *mittôk hâ’ēš*. It is the bush, and not the fire, that appears to have been "overlapped" by Yahweh, or that shows a "circumstantial divinity." The preternatural fire that Moses sees is a wonder calling his attention to the divine presence, but the text does not explicitly indicate that that presence was fiery.

In Leviticus 10:1-2, meanwhile, Nadab and Abihu approach *lipnê yhwh*, "before Yahweh," before fire came out *millipnê yhwh*, "from before Yahweh," and slew them (see pgs. 185-189). Although the fire is certainly "sent" by this localized divine presence,

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452 In the text of the Hebrew Bible, Leviticus 10:1-2 immediately follows Leviticus 9:23-24, in which Yahweh appears in the form of the *kabôd yhwh*, although many commentators believe that Leviticus 9 and
the presence itself is not necessarily fiery, nor does the "sent" fire appear to "be" Yahweh by function, circumstance, or overlap. In fact, the use of the phrase millipnê yhwh calls to mind instances of servants or officials sent out to perform a task. Such language implies that the preternatural fire in this passage took the form of a being of fire like the ones mentioned in Psalm 50:3 or 97:3. The preternatural fire in this passage is a wonder connected to the localized divine presence, but unlike such wonders elsewhere, the preternatural fire in Leviticus 10:1-3 does not draw a worshipper in but rather repels a worshipper who profanes the sanctuary.

Likewise, in 2 Chronicles 7:1-3, the fire comes down from heaven to consume the offerings exactly as the kəbôd yhwh fills the temple of Yahweh (see pgs. 184-185). Guided by Aster's insight that the kəbôd yhwh represents the "perceptible presence of Yahweh," one must identify the kəbôd yhwh, and not the descending fire, as Yahweh's presence in this narrative. The fire in this passage is not Yahweh, but rather something that appears along with him and points to his nearby presence. As in Exodus 3:2 and Leviticus 10:2, the locus of the divine presence is not specifically fiery, and as a result, one cannot claim that the fire that falls on the offerings is an attribute of Yahweh that has taken on an identity of his own.

A similar narrative appears in Judges 6:21, although in this passage the localized presence of Yahweh appears in the form of a mal’ak yhwh (see pgs. 173-175). Like the preternatural fire that appeared to Moses, the fire in Judges 6:21 is a wonder that reveals to Gideon the nearness of the divine presence. The appearance of the fire leads to Gideon's to realize that he is in the midst of a divine encounter (Judges 6:22), and as the

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Leviticus 10 come from earlier narratives that were edited together at a later time. See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 628-633, and Levine, *Numbers 1-20*, 428-432.
encounter continues, it is Yahweh himself who continues to speak to Gideon (Judges 6:23). In no case does the fire embody or even play the role of Yahweh. It is a miraculous phenomenon that points to the nearby the divine presence.

e.) Yahweh sends fire that acts on his behalf, but his presence is not specifically nearby.

In the passages of (d) above, the narratives include a specific mention of a localized manifestation of Yahweh separate from the preternatural fire. In the passages of group (e), Yahweh's presence is either distant or not specifically mentioned. For example, in the overthrow of the cities on the plain in Genesis 19:24, Yahweh sends 'ēš mē'ēt yhwh min-hasšāmāyim. As mentioned in chapter 4 (see pgs. 132-133) the action of the fire is attributed directly to Yahweh. Although one could perhaps argue that the fire somehow "made Yahweh present" on earth, a less tortuous explanation is that Yahweh acted from heaven to overthrow the cities on the plain. The preternatural fire in Genesis 19:24 is certainly a "sent" fire, but nothing in the text indicates that Yahweh overlaps with it, that it shares his fiery nature, or that it takes on his identity as it accomplishes his will.

A similar conclusion can be drawn about the "sent" fire in Amos 1-2 and 7:4 (see pgs. 123-132). Yahweh sends the fire and it acts on his behalf, but it does not seem to manifest his presence as much as it acts for him at a distance. Likewise, in the complicated text of 2 Kings 1:9-16 (see pgs. 140-142), the fire comes from Yahweh but does not make Yahweh present. The detail in 2 Kings 1:12 specifically locates 'ēlōhîm in heaven as the source of the fire. Similarly, in 1 Chronicles 21:26, Yahweh sends fire from heaven onto David's sacrifice as a response to his prayer (see pgs. 183-184). The
narrative locates Yahweh in heaven, while the fire acts for him at a distance. The narrative does not indicate that the fire from heaven becomes Yahweh's presence on earth or that it remains on the altar as a continuing indication of the divine presence. The fiery hail in Exodus 9:23-24 (see pg. 133) is similar to these other images. It is a sent fire, but it does not explicitly come from a "fiery" Yahweh, it does not make Yahweh present on earth, and it does not lead to a continuing divine presence in any way. It has the characteristics of the chastising fires in Amos 1-2 and 2 Kings 1:9-16, or of the cultic fire in 1 Chronicles 21:26. It is a one-time phenomenon that puts the divine will into effect at a distance.

The narrative of the coals scattered over Jerusalem (Ezekiel 10:2-7) provides another example (see pgs. 145-147). The fire has its source not in Yahweh himself, but rather in the coals under the throne. These are fiery inasmuch as the entire divine environment is fiery. Nothing in the text indicates they come from Yahweh's fiery body, the way coals do in 2 Samuel 22:9 or Psalm 18:9. These coals manifest the divine wrath, although their effects are not immediately felt in the narrative. In this they are similar to the chastening fires Yahweh promises to send on the cities and nations in Amos 1-2.

Another complex narrative in this passage is the 'ēš-yhwh that descends on Elijah's sacrifice in 1 Kings 18:38 (see pgs. 136-138). The description of the 'ēš-yhwh shows signs of a distinct identity, but not an independent one. The 'ēš-yhwh itself, and not Yahweh, is the subject of the action in the narrative. The narrative establishes that the 'ēš-yhwh is "sent" (1 Kings 18:24) and that when it arrives it "falls" (MT) or "falls from heaven." Nothing in the text indicates that it bears a functional or circumstantial divinity, or that it is an example of the fluidity tradition. Although the appearance of the
'ēš-yhwh inspires an act of worship on the part of the assembled onlookers, nothing in the text indicates that they worship the fire. Like the preternatural fires that falls on David's sacrifice (1 Chronicles 21:26), the 'ēš-yhwh is a wonder that indicates Yahweh's action at a distance.

f.) The fire is preternatural, but not Yahweh.

The fire in several narratives is undoubtedly preternatural but is also clearly not Yahweh. Certainly the easiest narrative about which to make such a claim is 1 Kings 19:12 (see pgs. 138-140). The narrative specifically states that Yahweh is not in the fire. The fire is part of a divine vision, and might even have mythic roots in the "fire that goes before Yahweh" in ancient poetry (Deuteronomy 33:2, Epic of Erra 1:10-12, 99), but here it is explicitly stated not to be Yahweh.

One can also make this claim for several other examples. For example, the 'ēš that goes before Yahweh in Psalm 50:3 and 97:3 is a mythic being that accompanies Yahweh in his war-train (see pgs. 160-163). It does not embody Yahweh or manifest his presence at a distance. Similarly, the šrāpīm in Isaiah 6:6-7 are fiery beings that attend Yahweh's throne, but that do not seem to get their fire from Yahweh or manifest his presence (see pgs. 1163-165). Finally, the chariots of fire in 2 Kings 2:11-12 and 2 Kings 6:17 seem neither to embody Yahweh nor manifest his localized presence (see pgs. 148-152). Although it is easy to imagine Yahweh as the driver of the chariot, such a role is not clearly stated in 2 King 2:11-12, and would be difficult to claim of the plural chariots of fire in 2 Kings 6:17.
3. Summary

As the previous list demonstrates, narratives in the Hebrew Bible depict the relationship of preternatural fire and Yahweh with a great deal of variation. No single type of relationship predominates. In some cases, preternatural fire is intimately wedded to Yahweh's localized presence. In other cases, it is not clear whether a relationship, if any, can be sketched between Yahweh and preternatural fire. Such variation makes it difficult to produce any clear argument that fire acted as a hypostasis of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible.

III. Conclusions

Theodore Lewis inspired this research project with a question about the role of fire in representing Yahweh. Under the heading, *Hypostatic Fire? Hypostatic Anger?* he asked, "Was fire personified to the point that it functioned as a surrogate for Yahweh that might act independent of Yahweh? Or are we working in the realm of figurative or metaphorical language and we should not use such to reconstruct a pseudo-mythology that never existed in the minds of the ancients?"453 It is clear from the previous research that the simple answer to his first question is "no." In the Hebrew Bible, no divine attribute of fire ever took on a fully independent identity in either cult or narrative. There are two types of "independent fire" on the gradient above, namely the šərāpîm and the chariots of fire, but in neither case do the images seem to be a divine attribute that was personified or able to function as a surrogate for Yahweh. The šərāpîm are fiery because they are descended from fiery mythic antecessors, most likely the Egyptian uraeus. The

mythic background of fiery chariots is more difficult to sketch, but nowhere is it possible to argue that they are a substantivized fiery attribute of Yahweh.

**A. Fire as a Semi-independent Hypostasis - Genesis 15:17**

In the speculative reading of Genesis 15:17 presented in chapter 4 (see pgs. 154-159) preternatural fire does take on an identity similar to the one that McCarter termed a "semi-independent hypostasis." Just as Yahweh's 'āšērā could show a distinct and recognizable character while at the same time remaining an attribute, the "presence" of Yahweh, so in Genesis 15:17 does Yahweh's 'ēš achieve a distinct character while manifesting Yahweh's active presence.

In covenant rite of Genesis 15:17, the lappid 'ēš passes between the gozārim of the slaughtered animal. It is the tannûr, however, that represents the localized presence of Yahweh. The word lappid normally describes a fire that accompanies Yahweh, and the lappid 'ēš has the characteristics of a ministering spirit. Yet in the description of this covenant rite, the lappid 'ēš alone performs the role that it is necessary for Yahweh to play: the lappid 'ēš passes between the pieces of the slaughtered animals. Genesis 15:17 describes a sharing of identity. Using Selz's language, this is an example of "functional divinity." The lappid 'ēš is Yahweh inasmuch as it is functions on his behalf, not unlike the way that, in the sacred marriage rite, a cultic actor became Dumuzi. Alternatively, to describe this sharing of identity with Sommer's language, Yahweh shared his identity with the lappid 'ēš by overlapping with it. In either case, the lappid 'ēš temporarily becomes Yahweh for the duration of the rite.
The *tannûr* and the *lappîd ʾēš* share more than just divine identity, however. They also share a fiery identity. The *lappîd ʾēš* is the divine fire, sent out from a smoky, fiery *tannûr* to symbolize Yahweh in the rite. Without overworking the image, one should not ignore the fact that the *tannûr* that marks Yahweh's presence is more than just fiery; it is a *tannûr ʾāšān*, a "smoking oven," from which only one quality, the smoke-producing ʾēš, goes forth. The *lappîd ʾēš*, therefore, appears to be one of Yahweh's attributes, his substantivized ʾēš, which has taken on, if not a full independence, at least a distinct identity for the purposes of this rite.

The *lappîd ʾēš* in Genesis 15:17 therefore shares a relationship with Yahweh on two levels: it symbolizes the active divine presence, and it is an extension of the fiery motif present in the *tannûr*. It is distinct from him, appearing in the narrative side-by-side with the *tannûr* that serves as a divine symbol. It does not demonstrate full independence from him, remaining, to quote Bousset, "mit seinem Wesen verschmolzen."454 As it is conceptually "merged" with Yahweh's "being," the *lappîd ʾēš* can "become" Yahweh temporarily as it functions in the rite, a transformation that the scholarship of Selz and Sommer both help explain. The narrative of Genesis 15:17, therefore, symbolizes the sending of the active divine presence by the sending out of the fiery *lappîd ʾēš*. The active divine presence symbolized in the *lappîd ʾēš* is Yahweh in as much as it can bind him to the covenant, but it is not Yahweh in as much as it is not the fullness of the divinity symbolized by the smoking, fiery *tannûr*. As something that both "is-and-is-not" Yahweh that mediates his presence, the hypostatized active divine

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presence symbolized in the lappid 'ēš fulfills the definition of a semi-independent hypostasis.

B. Non-hypostatic Images of Fire

It is clear from the analysis above that, apart from this speculative reading of Genesis 15:17, fire is not normally understood to be a hypostasis of Yahweh. Texts that seemed to suggest such a hypostatic relationship, like the mentions of the 'ēš yhwh in Numbers 11:1-3 and 1 Kings 18:38 lack any mention that Yahweh himself displays an attribute of fire. The 'ēš yhwh is not clearly a hypostatized personal attribute, like the 'ap yhwh, but is more likely a weapon or a tool. The mentions of fire going forth millîpñē yhwh in Leviticus 9:24 and 10:2 were very promising when the consensus among scholars understood the kəbōd yhwh to be "cloud-encased fire" as Weinfeld called it.455 Aster's well argued point, that the kəbōd yhwh was better understood as the "perceptible presence" of Yahweh, and that Yahweh's presence was manifest by more phenomena than fire alone, encourages one to caution.456 Although the kəbōd yhwh certainly has a fiery aspect in Exodus 24:17 and Exodus 40:38, nothing in the narrative of Leviticus 9:23-24 indicates that the kəbōd yhwh was fiery when fire went forth from it. Leviticus 10:1-3 does not even mention the kəbōd yhwh, stating simply wâṭtēšē 'ēš millîpñē yhwh, "fire went out from before Yahweh." The knowledge that the text of the Hebrew Bible contains many auctorial voices and many editorial hands demands a parsimonious reading of the evidence. A statement that the kəbōd yhwh is fiery in one narrative does not allow one to assume that every mention of the kəbōd yhwh implies a fiery


456 Aster, Unbeatable Light, 277.
phenomenon. Thus in spite of many superficial implications, the Hebrew Bible is almost completely without narratives that describe a fiery attribute of Yahweh taking on a life of its own.

If preternatural fire is not a hypostasis of Yahweh, one must ask then why the authors and editors of the Hebrew Bible were so taken by fire as an indication of Yahweh's presence and activity. In their descriptions of preternatural fire, authors and editors of the Hebrew Bible work especially with three features that make fire a useful symbol for supernatural activity. Fire is ethereal, fire is powerful even when small, and fire can be localized and its beneficial features utilized without it ever being fully under human control.

Fire, by its very nature, is ethereal. It suggests something "other-worldly." It is a feature of the natural world, but its behavior has many idiosyncratic qualities. Its presence is unmistakable, but it lacks material substance and at times even lacks a stable form. Under the right conditions, it can expand and change shape very quickly. To use Selz's language, these ethereal qualities of fire were practically an invitation to religious thinkers to imagine a preternatural fire that belonged in the "divine" category. Narrative mentions of lightning give the clearest evidence of this. It is a regular feature of a storm, and yet it is also strongly associated with divine presence and activity. Israelite writers understood lightning to be a form of fire, but they regarded its power, intensity, rapid movement, and quickly changing shape as indications of divinity.

Fire is powerful. To use Otto's language, it reflects the *mysterium tremendum* of the divinity. The energy given off by a storm of wildfire or military conflagration inspires immediate feelings of mortality and contingency. Awareness of such feelings
appears in pentateuchal narratives like Exodus 19:18, in prophecies like Amos 1-2, or in historical narratives like 1 Kings 18:38-39, or 2 Chronicles 7:1-3. The power of a massive fire is a superb metaphor to communicate the *mysterium tremendum* of Yahweh.

Fire is too powerful to be completely tamed, but its energy could be utilized under controlled conditions. In other words, fire could be "domestic" without ever being fully "domesticated." Fires localized in the hearths of homes and workplaces provided the light and energy necessary for human activity. Such fires required careful handling; legislation like Exodus 22:5 reminded people to treat domestic fire with respect or pay the consequences. When the Hebrew Bible compares Yahweh to ovens, torches, lamps, and kilns (Genesis 15:17, Exodus 19:18, Isaiah 31:9) it compares him to such "domestic" types of fire. Localized fire represented Yahweh's *mysterium fascinans*, his power to focus and hold human attention in covenant rituals or cultic exchanges. Even cultic burning was a ritualized form of food preparation. Like a home fire that was domestic without being domesticated, localized cultic fires could do great damage if approached with disrespect or without ritual precautions (Leviticus 10:1-3, Numbers 16:35). When treated with care, however, a continuous cultic fire provided a vivid indication of Yahweh's continuous presence in and illumination of Israel.

These features appealed especially to writers in two Israelite traditions, those today identified as the writers of the book of Deuteronomy, and those identified as the writers of the "priestly" traditions of the Hebrew Bible. References in Deuteronomy 4-5 especially relate Yahweh's appearance at Horeb to the appearance of a massive, frightening fire.457 The writers emphasize the terror-inducing nature of the fire.

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(Deuteronomy 5:5). The qualities of fire itself suggests the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* to which the writers of Deuteronomy demanded total commitment. At the same time, fire's lack of material substance and stable form provides them with a perfect justification for the prohibition of artificial reproductions of any religious image (Deuteronomy 4:12, 4:15-18). It provided the writers of Deuteronomy with a description of Yahweh that was nearly impossible to reproduce iconographically. The power of fire and its immaterial nature gave the writers of Deuteronomy a perfect metaphor to describe Yahweh's appearance.

Priestly writers have their own reasons to appreciate the qualities of fire, which they understand to be an essential part of the cult, and which they often use to describe the *kôbôd yhwh*. The image of a fire that is "domestic" yet not "domesticated" appeal to their intuition of the divine. To use Selz's idea, the ethereal nature of fire suggested something that could "cross boundaries." Milgrom also understood this when he imagines the sacrificial fire described in Leviticus as a kind of "gate." Priestly authors understood fire as essential to the cult because it was the agency that transformed an offering from human food to divine gift. It was easy to predicate this transforming nature to fire whose ethereal nature already suggested something otherworldly. The domestic yet untamed nature of Yahweh is well symbolized in the *ʾēš tāmîd* that transformed these offerings. The *ʾēš tāmîd* was perpetually localized and had to be provided with fuel like a natural fire. When necessary, however, it could take on preternatural qualities to defend a cult site in danger of profanation (Numbers 16:35). Although no text treats the *ʾēš tāmîd* as Yahweh himself, it was easy to imagine such a holy fire having occasional

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characteristics of and serving as a gate to the divine realm. A similar notion likely also lies behind the interactions of the *mal’ak yhwh* and the fire of offering in Judges 13:20.

C. Final Thoughts

It is more for these reasons, and not any hypostatic considerations, that fire is one of the most common phenomena associated with Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible. Fire appealed to Israelite religious thinkers because its very nature already suggests a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. Fire was at once perceptible in this world yet clearly unlike anything else in it. Similarly, those who respect fire and learn its ways are rewarded with its power, illumination, and ability to transform. In short, fire and Yahweh already shared a number of features, and Israelite religious thinkers drew on all these similarities in their use of fire as a symbol for Yahweh and his agents at work in human history.
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