Abstract

In this dissertation, I establish five criteria for determining a Council of Yahweh text: 1) Multiple gods are present; 2) The setting is Heaven; 3) There is judgment; 4) There is some form of discussion; and 5) Yahweh is the leader of the council. Using these criteria I determine that the Council of Yahweh texts are Isaiah 6, 1 Kings 22, Job 1-2, Zechariah 3, and Daniel 7. Then using the criteria of being named, a witness and involved, along with the literary context, I explore these texts to determine if the characters involved are members of the Council of Yahweh. After establishing a cast of members, I determine that there are three tiers of membership within the council. The first tier belongs to the chief god, in this case Yahweh. The second tier is called the Councilors and the two divisions are the Advisors and the Officers. The third tier is the Agents and the two divisions on this tier are the Commissioned and the Officials. Finally, I explore the potential for conceptual evolution, especially in relationship to monotheism and the participation of human beings within the Council of Yahweh.
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CHAPTER ONE: DEFINING THE DIVINE COUNCIL AND THE PARAMETERS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the membership and structure of the Council of Yahweh as it is portrayed in the Hebrew Bible. The phrase “divine council” is used to describe the government or royal court of the supreme deity. In order to justify a new study on this topic, one must question the underlying assumptions of divine council studies, including the way in which comparative study is usually conducted. I first became interested in the divine council while researching my Th.M. thesis on שָׁטָן, as it was the setting for this character in Job 1-2 and Zechariah 3.1 It was while doing this research that I became dissatisfied with the current scholarship on this topic. Most scholars begin with the texts found at Ugarit or Mesopotamia, outline a structure based on those religious traditions, and then explore the material in the Hebrew Bible in order to determine how it fits with the other religions. This process, while logical, has led to certain assumptions and even results that cannot be confirmed through the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, one purpose of this study is to question those assumptions. In doing so, I will develop the following points: firstly, there are multiple councils in the Hebrew Bible and not all of them belong to Yahweh; secondly, the Council of Yahweh negates a

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1 Ellen White, “The Purpose and Portrayal of the שָׁטָן in the Old Testament” (Th.M. Thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2004). This earlier study has significantly influenced this project in relationship to Job 1-2, Zechariah 3, Joshua, and the character of שָׁטָן. These influences will be noted throughout the dissertation. Portions of this original study are included at the end of this study in Appendixes A-F. These contain mostly factual information or information that has not changed with further study. If interpretive information is present, it represents views that I still hold unless otherwise noted. Places where there are new contributions, I note in a secondary series of endnotes within the original text.
claim for radical monotheism but can reveal insight into the development from polytheism towards monotheism; and finally, there are textual strands that experiment with human membership on various levels within the council.

**History of Scholarship**

Research on the divine council is not new. Early studies by Cross, Kingsbury, Lohfink, Pederson, Robinson, and Tsevat are helpful but most of them are neither detailed nor extensive. Moreover, most studies have either focused on one passage or one member of the council.²

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While these studies are helpful in gaining insight into the details regarding aspects of the council, they are not extensive enough to provide a holistic picture of the Council of Yahweh. Other full-length studies focus on the deity in general or the characteristics/attributes of God. While these studies provide insight into the nature and identity of the deity, they do not focus on the council or the deity’s role in the council. In addition, Korpel makes this statement regarding methodology: “Because the size of the Ugaritic corpus is much smaller than that of the Old Testament we made the Ugaritic usage the standard to establish the degree of correspondence.” Taking the Ugaritic material as “the standard” has been the typical approach to understanding the council.


5 Korpel, A Rift in the Cloud, 619.

This, in and of itself, is not problematic, as it does provide insight and a means of comparison. However, if one’s main interest is in the Israelite concept then the primary focus needs to be on the Israelite material. Collins says, “When a Canaanite myth is used in the Hebrew Bible, it is inevitably torn from its original context and given a new meaning.” Thus, only after a biblical understanding is found can true comparative work be done.

A few studies have attempted a detailed overview of the divine council concept. The first full-length book on the subject was Mullen’s revision of his Harvard doctoral dissertation. Mullen begins with an exploration of the Ugaritic myths and pays close attention to the relationship among the members of the divine council in these texts, particularly El and Baʿal. The critique given to his work on the Hebrew Bible is that he reads through an Ugaritic lens. His major contribution for the purposes of this study of the Council of Yahweh is in exposing the unique role the prophets played in this

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8 The Ugaritic material naturally is an important comparison for biblical material and this study should not be seen as an argument against utilizing material from other ancient Near Eastern cultures. This is especially true since the other material is older and likely provides insight into the foundations of Israelite religion, based on the theories of origins stemming from scholars such as Mendenhall (George E. Mendenhall, "The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," Biblical Archaeologist 17 [1962], 50-76) and Gottwald (Norman K. Gottwald, The Tribe of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050 B.C.E. [Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979]). These theories diverge on many levels, but agree on the theory that the majority of Israelites were originally Canaanites and therefore, Yahwism evolves out of Canaanite polytheism. For recent scholarship on this theory see William G. Dever, Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From? (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Yet, as can be seen from the creation and flood parallels, Israel would often operate within traditional categories, but do so in such a way that they express their unique theologies. So to begin with a structure from outside Israel and then search for it within the Hebrew Bible can cause one to over-emphasize the similarities and to minimize the differences. Thus, it is important to begin with the Israelite material and then use the external data to help refine the theory and enter into a proper dialogue. This study is an attempt to provide the first piece in this process.


council. However, he completely omits the scenes in the prologue of Job, and he does not attempt to establish the structure of either the Ugaritic or Hebrew Bible council.

Smith advanced the discussion with a very short article outlining four tiers within the divine council; this was followed by Handy’s monograph, with Smith’s book about monotheism following a little over five years later. While they use different metaphors to explain the structure, Smith and Handy have concluded that there is a four-tier divine council throughout the ancient Near East. It is important to note at this point that Handy’s focus is on the pantheon and that frames any comments he makes about the council and that Smith’s use is not always rigid; this will be explored in more detail. Regardless, these tiers do not correlate with the evidence from divine council texts in the Hebrew Bible. Therefore, a new understanding of the council’s structure from the perspective of the Hebrew Bible is required as a basis for further comparative studies.

Smith, using the terminology of family, explores the four tiers in the Ugaritic material, and Lowell Handy examines these tiers using the metaphor of bureaucracy. It may appear that these authors have very different positions on the structure of the divine council. However, their different terminology is a result of their different purposes more than the actual results. In fact, since their conclusions are so similar and no alternatives


13 Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven*.


15 Handy’s terminology and purpose comes out of his desire to use an existing model (bureaucracy) as a metaphor through which he explains the structure observed in the various pantheons. Smith on the other hand bases his terminology and purpose on the language used in the texts themselves. Despite this linguistic difference, the structure is remarkably similar.
have been put forward to date, one might conclude that there is a near consensus regarding the structure of the divine council in the ancient Near East.\textsuperscript{16}

On the top tier is the chief god of the nation. At Ugarit this tier was populated by El, who has the authority to issue commands and rule over the assembly, and Athirat (Asherah) because she is his spouse and has influence over him.\textsuperscript{17} On tier two, one finds the great gods, which at Ugarit would be the seventy children of El and Athirat. This is the level where most of the “combat and conflict” arise and for that matter are solved.\textsuperscript{18} The third tier is more complex. It comprises deities who are more powerful or more important than the lesser deities, and yet they are not part of El’s actual family.\textsuperscript{19} An example of a god at this level is Kothar-wa-Hasis, a foreign god, as is evident from his homes in Egypt and Crete (CAT 1.3 VI 12-20). However, the greater gods need him, and

\footnotesize{\begin{enumerate}
\item This structure will be sketched briefly using Smith’s model, but when Handy differs that will be noted. The assertion that there is near consensus refers to the modern theories. Prior to the publications of Handy and Smith in particular there was a tri-level hypothesis at work based on CAT 1.15 ii 2-7 and its use of \textit{ṭlh} specifically. The debate did not question the threeness of the pantheon but rather the language used to express this “reality” of three (i.e., trinity of gods, threefold, three categories, etc.). One form of that hypothesis is proposed by Johannes C. de Moor and Klaas Spronk, \textit{A Cuneiform Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit} (New York: Brill, 1987), 205; T. H. Gaster, "The Canaanite Epic of Keret," \textit{Jewish Quarterly Review} 37 (1947), 285-93; H. L. Ginsberg, \textit{The Legend of King Keret: A Canaanite Epic of the Bronze Age} (Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research Supplementary Studies 2/3; New Haven: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1946), 22; John Gray, \textit{The Canaanites} (Ancient Peoples and Places 36; New York: Praeger, 1964), 58; Charles Virolleaud, \textit{Légendes de Babylone et de Canaan} (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1949), 143. The more recent interpretations of this passage view it as describing the way that the retinues arrived (i.e., that each group arrived in threes). Rin and Wyatt suggest a military connection rather than a “three” understanding; see Svi Rin, \textit{Acts of the Gods: The Ugaritic Epic Poetry} (Jerusalem: Israel Society for Biblical Research, 1968), xli; Nicholas Wyatt, \textit{Religious Texts from Ugarit} (The Biblical Seminar 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 212. For a good discussion of these theories see, Cho, \textit{Lesser Deities}, 22-31.
\item Smith, \textit{Origins of Biblical Monotheism}, 45.
\item Ibid.
\item This is the most complicated level of the theory to understand. Handy himself even says that the lines between these deities and those above are “not clearly defined”: Handy, \textit{Among the Host of Heaven}, 131. It is helpful to think of this as the tradeworkers of construction and the higher level as the general contractor. The tradeworkers take orders from the general contractor, but the general contractor cannot complete the project without the specialized work of the tradeworkers.
\end{enumerate}}
at times he is depicted as knowing more than they (e.g., CAT 1.1 III; 1.2 III; 1.2 IV; 1.4 V-VII). Smith, therefore, defines this tier as the “middle” ground between the greater gods and the lesser gods.\textsuperscript{20} The lesser deities comprise the final tier.\textsuperscript{21} Here one finds the messenger gods, the major deities’ military retinue, and the divine workers or staff members. While both Handy and Smith include this tier within the divine council,\textsuperscript{22} it is not universally accepted. For instance, Mullen does not include these divine figures as part of the council.\textsuperscript{23}

The main difference between Smith and Handy arises with respect to the Israelite material. When examining the Hebrew Bible, both begin with the four tiers and then examine the biblical text in order to fill them. This is precisely the methodological issue with their interpretations and the reason for a new study. Smith concludes that tier one is present in the person of Yahweh and that tier four exists in the form of the “angels,” which he sees as the other gods transformed into lesser divine beings.\textsuperscript{24} Similarly, tiers two and three have been omitted due to the transformation within Israelite religion from polytheism to monotheism, which also accounts for the change in status of the beings in tier four.\textsuperscript{25} Heiser presents this understanding of the issue when he states, “The data apparently informs us that Israelite religion evolved from polytheism to henotheistic


\textsuperscript{21} This distinction is challenged by Cho who claims that there is very little difference between tier three and tier four and thus considers the deities in both tiers in his analysis of lesser deities: Cho, \textit{Lesser Deities}, 32. Despite this critique, Cho continues to refer to four tiers and adopts Handy’s structure and terminology.

\textsuperscript{22} Handy, \textit{Among the Host of Heaven}, 149; Smith, \textit{Origins of Biblical Monotheism}, 46.

\textsuperscript{23} Mullen, \textit{Assembly of the Gods}, 282.

\textsuperscript{24} Smith, \textit{Origins of Biblical Monotheism}, 49.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 47-50.
monolatry to monotheism.” While it seems certain that there is development within Israelite religion, a linear progression ending in radical monotheism should be questioned, and the council itself should be considered in this larger discussion.

Handy takes a slightly different approach. In his version, Yahweh occupies tier one, but tier two has not been edited out by the development towards monotheism. He places characters such as the Lying Spirit in 1 Kings 22 and הִשְׁטֶן from Job and Zechariah on this tier as gods. On tier three he suggests that Nehushtan (2 Kings 18:4) and Ba’al-Zebub (2 Kings 1:1-8) might have functioned at this level in Israelite religion. Yet, his proposal is cautious due to lack of information regarding this level in the larger ancient Near Eastern context. On tier four, Handy takes the term הַמָּלָאךְ literally as messengers, even though that is not how these characters function within biblical council texts; in fact, the role of messenger is usually filled by prophets, not הַמָּלָאךְ. Thus he bases most of his argumentation regarding this tier on terminology and names. This is a mixed methodology, since his four tiers were initially developed on the basis of function. Therefore, this study will examine the way in which the members of the Council of Yahweh function, in order to develop a structural understanding purely on the basis of function.

While both theorists propose plausible explanations for understanding the Council

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26 Michael S. Heiser, "Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism?: Towards an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18 (2008), 2. It is important to note that Heiser is merely describing the standard pattern in scholarship. He, himself, questions this understanding.


28 Ibid., 140-42.

29 Ibid., 152-54.
of Yahweh, more could be said regarding its presentation in the Hebrew Bible. For example, Smith is almost certainly correct in stating that the development towards monotheism is an important factor for the Israelite divine council. However, even he points out that divine council imagery or scenes also occur in post-exilic, so-called monotheistic, texts (e.g., 2nd Isaiah, Zechariah, Daniel, etc.).

This is particularly important due to the numerous recent studies that explore the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and monotheism. On the other hand, Handy attempts to find elements within the Council of Yahweh that relate to each of the four tiers. Yet, his criteria for

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determining who belongs to what tier is not articulated and appears to the reader as mixed methodology in order to preserve the expected structure. Thus whether another structure emerges if the Hebrew Bible is examined without a four tier approach, needs to be explored.

The systematic studies by Mullen, Handy, and Smith deal mostly with the pre-Israelite ancient Near East concept of the divine council; like Korpel’s work, the paradigm is dictated by the material of another ancient Near East culture. Then an attempt is made to apply this notion to the Hebrew Bible. Heiser, on the other hand, focuses primarily on literature belonging to the residents of the land of Israel in his attempt to demonstrate that the divine council survives the exile and thus challenges the notion that Israel is monotheistic after the sixth century BCE. Heiser claims that the dominant concept in the post-exilic period was that there was a vice-regent, but his focus on the Second Temple material makes his analysis more fitting for later Jewish concepts of the divine council rather than an ancient Israelite understanding. In short, scholarship to date has focused on an earlier ancient Near Eastern or latter Jewish divine council, and there is still the need to explore the complete Israelite concept of the Council of Yahweh as presented within the Old Testament. The question then, is can a structure be discerned within the Council of Yahweh using just the texts of the Hebrew Bible?

**Defining the Problem**

When it comes to the members of the council, many people believe they understand who is involved. Scholars make different assumptions concerning the members of the

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32 Michael S. Heiser, “The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature” (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004), 6. Page numbers for Heiser’s dissertation are based on my own count of the printed text as none are available in the UMI version.
council, but there are very few studies as to which characters are council members. For example, the divine council structures described above are really pantheon structures that include all the deities, regardless of whether or not they actually appear in a council setting in any of the known texts. However, this assumption is difficult, if not impossible, to apply to the Hebrew Bible, particularly due to the development from polytheism to monotheism that can be found in the various texts that comprise the canon. Therefore, in order to establish a structure for the council as it is represented in the Hebrew Bible, one must begin by examining the Hebrew Scriptures in order to determine the members of Yahweh’s Council and only on the basis of this collective establish a structure. This is not the first attempt to compile a list of heavenly beings, but a comprehensive list of Council of Yahweh members or functionaries within the Hebrew Bible has not been proposed to date.

Furthermore, membership in the divine council cannot be determined simply by scanning all the texts that mention the council to identify the characters present. This is

33 This phenomenon is highlighted in the work of Smith who uses “divine council,” “divine assemblies,” and “pantheon” interchangeably and never actually provides a definition for the divine council in contrast to these other two things. In fact, if looking at the index under council, the reader is instructed to look up divine assemblies, despite there being a listing for divine council: Smith, Origins of Biblical Monotheism, 313.

34 It also gives the reader the impression that the structure presented is more a structure of the pantheon than of the divine council. For example, it is hard to see how a tier comprising worker or artisan deities would be part of a council designed to judge and determine fates. Thus, the specific definition for a divine council used in the present study and detailed on pages 14-15 of this chapter does not contain such figures, since I do not attempt to provide a structural understanding of the entire cast of heavenly characters.

35 The fullest attempt to present such a list is the recent work of Cho, Lesser Deities, passim. However, his list is limited to those he defines as “lesser” beings. Thus his work provides similarities, but not the focus needed in order to provide insight into the council specifically. Also, one could determine a list of members or functionaries from the work of authors such as Smith, Handy, and Mullen, but since their focus is more on structure, function, and comparative work, the reader would need to mine their work in order to compile a list, which may not be comprehensive even from the author’s perspective.
particularly true because the phrase “divine council” does not occur in the Hebrew Bible (nor in the literature remaining from other ancient Near East cultures), but is used to refer to a phenomenon noticed by modern scholars. Therefore, it is important to define what one means by the phrase “divine council.” This phrase has been used in a variety of ways by various authors. Some have used it as a generic phrase to refer to the entire pantheon of gods in whichever culture they are discussing. Smith begins his discussion of the divine council by outlining terminology that is usually associated with the divine council. He adopts the following definition: “wherever two or more deities with El are present, there the general divine assembly meets, even if the terminology of council is absent from the passage.” This is particularly confusing since he has previously said that terminology indicates a divine council, but is now saying that it does not have to be present. In addition, he follows this new definition by insinuating that the councils that take place in El’s home may be some other kind of council, but he does not fully explore this potential difference. Handy, on the other hand, does not even use the phrase

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36 This is not to say that there are not terms (such as ṣhr ḫlm at Ugarit) that are used to describe the divine council but there is no universal phrase, and throughout the ancient Near East traditions there are multiple phrases that can be used to describe this phenomenon. In addition, there are texts that depict a divine council but do not contain any of these phrases. These phrases in the Hebrew Bible will be explored in the following chapter.

37 E.g., “In this research three indications of ‘divine assembly’, ‘divine council’, and ‘pantheon’ are to be interchangeably used to denote the plurality of deities”: Cho, Lesser Deities, 1, no. 2. This is also the approach used by Smith in his chapter on the divine council, but his opinion is more complicated as he does seem to have some understanding of a difference between the pantheon, or general assembly, and the divine council, but at no point does he provide a definition that would distinguish between the two: Smith, Origins of Biblical Monotheism, 43.

38 Smith, Origins of Biblical Monotheism, 41-42.

39 Ibid., 43.

40 He says, “The issues are admittedly complex and the data debatable, but given these differences in the rendering of El’s abode and the site of the divine council, caution in identifying them is in order; the same point may apply to the language of El’s council and the pantheon more generally.” Ibid.
“divine council,” but is explicit that his observations are about the pantheon as a whole.⁴¹ Heiser is clear that his dissertation is about the divine council exclusively, but at no point does he actually provide a definition for “divine council.” He does, however, use two criteria for determining council passages, namely terminology and location of the council.⁴² Robinson gives the most extensive definition. For Robinson a Council of Yahweh scene must be located in “the temple-palace of Yahweh,” he must name his councillors “the sons of god,” and they must be in “subjection to Him,” as they are his “advisory council.”⁴³ Gordon makes a distinction between all groupings of gods and divine councils and provides the following definition, “a Divine Council (DC) means a meeting of the gods, normally under a presiding deity, to hear or to formulate, or even announce, decisions affecting divine or human affairs.”⁴⁴ Yet, the definition can be even more specific, for not everyone who is at court is actually a courtier or royal. In his examination of the Mesopotamian council, Jacobsen viewed the council as an assembly that deals with a specific crisis, and all appointments made by said council were only for the duration of the crisis.⁴⁵ Mullen follows this understanding for both Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible. He says, “The pictures of Yahweh in his council present him as the head of the assembly, the god whose decree determined the decision and actions of his

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⁴¹ Not only is that explicit in the subtitle of the book, *The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (empasis added), but also throughout the introductory chapter, especially 5-8.


messengers and holy ones.” Thus, depending on the definition used, one can get very diverse results. Therefore, it is of primary importance to develop a definition before exploring the concept. The first issue is what makes a divine council different than divine beings or the pantheon? If the phrase “divine council” is taken seriously as a description of this phenomenon, then the definition must derive from this title. The definition of “divine” implies that the noun it modifies is neither human nor earthly. The very definition of “council” implies a gathering of beings, but it also implies a formal gathering. In general, a council is a governing body that determines the fate of the thing being governed. Thus for the purposes of this study the divine council will be viewed as the heavenly government, which most likely resembled the earthly royal court, since this would be the council most familiar to the authors of the texts. Therefore, my working definition of a divine council text is a scene in which the fate of the world or an individual is being debated and/or decided, which often involves courtroom imagery or uses conciliar language. This narrow definition obviously means that there are numerous scenes involving divine beings that are excluded from the divine council tradition; while they may have some council connection, this is not apparent from the narrative context,

46 Mullen, Assembly of the Gods, 120.


49 This still allows for slight differences among ancient Near East cultures. In Israel it relates to Yahweh’s kingship in that if Yahweh is viewed as a heavenly king then his retinue would be the heavenly royal court (i.e., his divine council).
and thus they will be omitted from the current study.\footnote{This narrow definition can also cause some difficulties when interacting with the classic four-tier concept, since the members of each tier were not allocated based on this narrow a definition. Thus, while in this study some of the characters might be defined as functionaries or agents, in the previous studies they would be considered members. By limiting the definition in this way there may be characters who have access to the throne room of Heaven and speak or act in council and yet not be full-fledged members of the council (cf. prophets in the Bible to the messenger gods in the Ugaritic material). This diversity needs to be kept in mind when doing comparative work.} This is done in order to ensure that the conclusions regarding the divine council are accurate. A step beyond this study would be to explore its results in relationship to these additional passages.

The definition above requires that a Council of Yahweh passage contain five elements.\footnote{Like the parallel scenes mentioned above, there may be cases where some of the criteria are involved, but not all five. These will not be included in this study in an effort to make certain that the texts are truly divine council texts. Further studies could explore these texts in relation to the conclusions made in this one.} The first is that it must take place in Heaven. This criterion reflects the otherworldliness of the “divine” within the definition and title. It provides clarity of context for the narrative. The second is that it must contain multiple divine beings. This criterion develops from the definition in that it recognizes that in order for it to be a “divine” council there must be deities present to engage in the council’s activities. Third, it must contain some form of dialogue among the members. Stemming from the previous criterion, this criterion takes the “council” part of the title and definition seriously. In order to be a council proper, the members must engage in some discussion, otherwise they would merely be a royal retinue. Fourth, it must contain some form of judgment on an individual or group. This criterion flows naturally from the rest. If the purpose of a council is to govern, then it must make resolutions that are binding on its constituents. This criterion gives focus and meaning to the criterion of discussion. In fact, the two are so closely tied to each other there are times when they may be woven into the same
narrative elements. Finally, Yahweh must be in charge of the council. This final criterion is specific to the Hebrew Bible and the current study. Since the objective of this study is to gain insight into Yahweh’s council, and not just divine councils in general, this is a necessary criterion for the present work.

Also, because the focus of this study is the members of the council, passages that might meet the criteria but do not give insight into the membership will not be explored. For example, the plural pronouns in the creation narratives of Genesis (1:26) almost certainly reflect the Council of Yahweh, but reveal nothing about the members of the council and thus will not be explored in greater depth.\footnote{A discussion of which passages can and cannot be used for this study appears in Chapter Two, especially pages 24-25, 26-44, 48, 51-52.}

An additional assumption by scholars is that there is only one council present in the Hebrew Bible.\footnote{While none of the authors mentioned explicitly state that there is only one council found in the Hebrew Bible, none of these authors, Cho, Handy, Heiser, or Smith, discuss the potential for more than one council, which implies they assume there is only one.} However, there may be more than one council in the Hebrew Bible, just as there are multiple councils within the literature from Ugarit.\footnote{There are several different councils mentioned in the Ugaritic material, such as the council of El (e.g., CAT 1.65.3; 1.40.25, 42; 1.15 III 19; 1.39.7; 1.62.16; 1.87.18; 1.40.25, 33–34), Ditanu (e.g., CAT 1.15 III 15; cf. line 4; 1.161.3, 10), Baal (e.g., CAT 1.162.17; 1.39.7; 1.62.16; 1.87.18), etc. For a good discussion of these councils see, Smith, Origins of Biblical Monotheism, 41-43.} Thus, the phrase “divine council” may be misleading, and therefore will not be used to refer to the Council of Yahweh.

One other term needs to be defined. Since this dissertation focuses on the structure of the Council of Yahweh, membership within that council is vitally important. Thus, what constitutes “membership” needs to be clarified from the beginning. For the purposes of this study, a “member” is defined as a being who is present and performs a
role essential to the actual function of the council meeting itself (e.g., engages in
discussion, provides advice, etc.). Presence alone is not enough to constitute
membership, since a defendant could be present within the council in order to be judged,
but would not be a member. Similarly, there can be functionaries, who have some
contact with or function for the council, but do not fulfill all the criteria for membership.55
This is different than playing a role within the council in that the actions they take happen
outside the council (i.e., outside Heaven), and yet serve to further the work of the council
(e.g., the prophets who pass on messages/decisions of the council). Thus, these
characters serve as agents of the council, but are not full members.

Within this exploration of membership, the assumption that all members are deities
must be questioned. For example, I explore nuances within the Council of Yahweh in
regard to human members. As Mullen has mentioned, there are reasons to understand the
prophets as members within the council.56 However, even within this category there
appears to be diversity and hierarchy. In addition, the role of Joshua in Zechariah 3
should be considered in relationship to human membership in the Council of Yahweh.
Thus, a portion of this dissertation will be devoted to a thorough study of the relationship
between human beings and the membership of Yahweh’s council.

I will explore the extent of the membership in the Council of Yahweh and based on
this list of members will establish the council’s structure, as well as analyse the various
strands of theology that are incorporated into the diverse texts that comprise the biblical

55 This category would relate to the fourth tier of beings in the classic divine council structure that
both Handy and Smith consider members: Handy, Among the Host of Heaven, 149; Smith, Origins of
Biblical Monotheism, 46. On the other hand, Mullen claims they are not members, but witnesses: Mullen,
Assembly of the Gods, 282. How this plays out in the Hebrew Bible will be explored in more depth in
Chapters Four and Five.

canon. Beyond this list and the proposed structure, this dissertation will explore the important concepts of monotheism, the nature of the council (particularly in relationship to different councils presented in the texts), and the possibility of human members in various levels of the council. These issues are particularly important as they represent a unique aspect of Israelite religion within its ancient Near East context. While many of my conclusions and insights have been noted in smaller studies, the benefit of this study is that it brings these observations into dialogue with each other and serves to provide a comprehensive study that has not taken place previously. In addition, it allows these observations to be evaluated according to the canonical divine council texts and therefore, contributes to the overall understanding of the Hebrew Bible.

**Methodology**

This dissertation begins by establishing which texts will be included in the study. This determination will be made on three bases. The first criterion is terminology that is typically associated with heavenly councils, such as סד, האלהים, בני האלהים, מ, and השמים. The second criterion will be that council motifs are present, such as the heavenly courtroom or deliberation among the gods regarding the fate of one or more humans. The final criterion is slightly different because it limits the texts to only those that provide insight into the membership of the council. Therefore, any text that does not mention individual members will not be included in the study list. Ultimately, I will examine 1 Kings 22,

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57 Each of these terms have provided that basis for individual studies; see particularly Heinz-Dieter Neef, *Gottes himmlischer Thronrat: Hintergrund und Bedeutung von sôd JHWH im Alten Testament* (Arbeiten zur Theologie 79; Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1994). However, this approach only presents a piece of the council puzzle and includes a significant amount of data that does not relate to the council at all (e.g., when סד means “secret” or “community”).
Isaiah 6, Job 1-2, Zechariah 3, and Daniel 7, although other texts, such as Genesis 6 and Daniel 3, will be used in a supplementary way. The primary texts then receive a detailed exegesis with a focus on a literary analysis of the characters that are present.

This dissertation will use both synchronic and diachronic methods, combining a historical-critical approach with literary methods. When one suggests a structural framework for the divine council, the very nature of that project entails a synchronic study of the texts. This type of analysis does not allow for a detailed history of religions approach that examines the differences and diversities within the Hebrew Bible. There are various strands of tradition within the material included in this study. These differences, therefore, need to be explored in depth. It is important to develop an overall paradigm regarding the structure of the Israelite divine council that can be contrasted and compared to the structure in other ancient Near Eastern cultures. At the same time, this proposed structure would need to be continually evaluated from within. It is for this reason that the dual methodology is used.

Both the synchronic and diachronic sections of this dissertation have limitations. Only council texts that focus on individually identified members will be used for the synchronic analysis. The diachronic analysis will be limited to the texts contained in the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, text-critical issues will be taken into consideration where

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58 Deuteronomy 32 and Psalm 82 also refer to a divine council and its membership, but I will argue that these texts depict a council other than the Council of Yahweh.

59 A minor example of this difference is Jeremiah’s insistence that a true prophet has access to the divine council, while Micah does not appear to have any knowledge of the divine council whatsoever. Though one needs to be cautious about attributing this idea to the historical Jeremiah because it is possible that this is a Deuteronomic insertion into the text, this does not change the fact that there are at least two theologies present in the Hebrew Bible. Jeremiah’s position might also be reflected in the reference to the 7 of Yahweh in Amos 3:7. Yet, this has to remain a tentative connection as 7 in Amos could be understood as “secret” not “council.”
appropriate. The study will not engage in cross-cultural comparative study.

**Outline**

In the next chapter, “Determining Council of Yahweh Texts,” I will present a detailed list of criteria for determining Council of Yahweh texts and then use the terminology usually associated with divine councils in order to determine a corpus of Council of Yahweh texts. This will be done by applying the five criteria for determining a Council of Yahweh text to each of the passages explored. This will eliminate some texts, such as Genesis 6 and Daniel 3, but also provide a list of texts to be studied further, namely 1 Kings 22, Isaiah 6, Job 1-2, Zechariah 3, and Daniel 7. In this chapter, I will also present Psalm 82 and Deuteronomy 32 as texts that do refer to a divine council, but they do so as a polemic against the divine councils from other ancient Near East cultures and not the Council of Yahweh. This will help clarify the parameters of the Council of Yahweh and explore the complexity of divine council texts with the canon.

I will follow this by exegeting the texts that provide the data for this dissertation in the third chapter, “The Council of Yahweh Texts and Their Exegesis.” In this chapter, I will exegete each text with a focus on individual characters and their actions within the passages, which will then form the foundation for the survey in Chapter Four. It is necessary to examine the history and redaction of all the texts involved as this feature will be important in the diachronic analysis of this study.

Chapter Four, “Members and Their Functions,” contains a list of council members based on the exegesis in Chapter Three. I explore the characteristics and abilities of each character, especially the way each character functions. Included in this chapter is a discussion of the role of these characters in non-council texts and whether these
additional texts are relevant to the council. No characters from outside council texts will be included.

In the next chapter, “Synchronic Analysis,” the data formulated in Chapters Three and Four are used in order to complete a synchronic reading of the material. In this chapter, I develop a theory regarding the overall structure of the Council of Yahweh as presented in the Hebrew Bible. This brings together all the passages depicting members of Yahweh’s Council and synthesizes the material at the macro-level. Then I develop a picture of the council that can only be discerned by merging the Council of Yahweh passages.

This is followed by “Diachronic Analysis.” Also using the data of Chapters Three and Four, this chapter includes a diachronic reading of the various theologies present in the various passages. It differs from Chapter Five in that it explores the distinctive elements found within the passages rather than the holistic picture. It follows Chapter Five because it explores the diversity found in the structure outlined in the earlier chapter and, therefore, uses it as the foundation for further analysis. Using the historical-critical data developed in Chapter Three, I present a theory regarding various theological strands that are present in the larger texts. In this chapter, I elaborate on the nuances of the three-fold conclusions that arise in the earlier chapter.

Chapter Seven, “Conclusions,” will include an exploration of the three-fold conclusion of the dissertation: multiple councils, human membership, and no radical monotheism. I will also explore the implications of these conclusions for the field and further avenues of study that arise from this project.
CHAPTER TWO: DETERMINING COUNCIL OF YAHWEH TEXTS

Introduction

Due to the universal nature of the divine council, it is important to explore the concept throughout the Hebrew Bible. The previous chapter defines a divine council text as one set in Heaven in which heavenly beings are depicted, discussion occurs, and someone is judged. Now attention must turn to determining which passages in the Hebrew Bible actually depict the Council of Yahweh. While this seems like a simple enough task, it is not. Certain passages are usually included in the discussions regarding the Council of Yahweh (e.g., 1 Kings 22, Zechariah 3, Job 1-2), but others are controversial (e.g., Gen 6:2-4, Deut 32:8). Thus, one must begin by determining what criteria will be used to verify whether a passage depicts a Council of Yahweh scene, and then one must examine every potential passage according to those criteria. There are two issues at stake here: first, does the passage in question contain a divine council scene; and second, if it does represent a divine council scene, is that divine council the Council of Yahweh? The five criteria for determining a Council of Yahweh text are:¹ 1) It must take place in Heaven; 2) Multiple divine beings must be present; 3) It must contain some form of dialogue regarding the judgment; 4) It must contain a judgment regarding the fate of a group or an individual; 5) Yahweh must been seen as the leader of the council. These criteria establish which passages to explore in conjunction with the Council of Yahweh.

¹ These criteria were established in Chapter One; see pages 15-16.
and this study.²

To begin the quest for Council of Yahweh texts, I turn to the second criterion. In order for it to be a divine council, multiple deities must be present, so one can begin by looking at texts where multiple deities are present and then determine whether these text meet the other criteria. Therefore, I will examine passages that contain phrases that by definition refer to more than one deity, such as האלהים בני השמים and then apply the other criteria. The final criterion, i.e., Yahweh’s presence, is particularly important for this study. Since the focus of the study is on the Council of Yahweh not divine councils in general, it is important to examine the passages where Yahweh appears to determine if any of them meet the criteria of a council text. Finally, passages that contain terms that can refer to councils/pantheons i.e.,ixed, are examined. Only those passages that are determined to be Council of Yahweh texts are then exegeted in the following chapter.

האלהים בני

The phrase האלהים בני or a derivative of this phrase occurs in Gen 6:2, 4; Deut 32:8; Pss 29:1; 82:6; 89:7; Job 1:6; 21:1; 38:7; and Dan 3:25. Each of these passages must be examined and evaluated according to the five criteria for a Council of Yahweh text. Three of these passages can be dismissed quickly: Pss 29:1; 89:7; Job 38:7. In

² Despite this statement, I recognize that forms and paradigms often have missing elements when presented in textual form. For example, Psalm 88 is a psalm of lament, but does not include the expected praise and thanksgiving at the end. Also, the elements of a call narrative are known, but most of the calls are missing at least one of the elements: Norman C. Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft 77 (1965), 297-323. Thus while a universal pattern holds, there are occasions where one or two elements might be missing from the pattern. However, only those texts that contain all the criteria will be included in order to ensure the results of this study are accurate regarding the Council of Yahweh.
Psalm 29, Yahweh is specifically named, and it might be set in Heaven, since the throne of Yahweh is mentioned in verse 10; however, there is no discussion and no judgment. Likewise, Psalm 89 does not have any discussion or judgment, and perhaps more importantly for the current study, it does not reveal any details about the individual members of the “sons of god.” Job 38 also follows this pattern. The remaining passages will be explored in more depth below.

**Job 1-2**

Two narratives in the prologue depict הָאָלָהִים בני (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6). The scene takes place during the yearly council meeting (v. 6) and opens with Yahweh initiating a conversation with הַשטָּן regarding the results of his “roving” activities that year (v. 7).

Yahweh then asks הַשטָּן about Job and his piety (v. 8). While God believes that Job is truly pious, הַשטָּן wonders if Job is pretending in order to attain a privileged state (vv. 7-8). הַשטָּן suggests that a true test of Job’s piety would involve removing his wealthy position (vv. 10-11). The Lord agrees, with the condition that Job not be physically harmed (v. 12). In the time between the two divine council scenes, Job loses all his wealth, cattle, and children, but still remains loyal to Yahweh (1:13-22). The next year the annual meeting opens in the same way and Yahweh again asks הַשטָּן about Job and his piety (2:1-3). Job is above reproach according to Yahweh and again הַשטָּן challenges this assumption and Job’s motives (vv. 3-5). This time הַשטָּן suggests that God afflict Job’s physical body directly, and the Lord agrees, with the stipulation that Job live through the

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3 The arguments in favour of understanding this as a yearly meeting are overwhelming and can be found in Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 17; John L. McLaughlin, "Their Hearts Were Hardened: The Use of Isaiah 6, 9-10 in the Book of Isaiah," *Biblica* 75 (1994), 4; Simon B. Parker, "Sons of (the) God(s)," in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Pieter W. van der Horst, and Bob Becking; 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 798.
experience (v. 6).

As far as the Council of Yahweh criteria are concerned, these pericopes clearly are set within Heaven since all the characters present are divine beings, and they present themselves before God. Also, when God asks השתן where he comes from, he replies “from the Earth,” which would be unnecessary if the conversation was taking place on Earth. The presence of בני האלהים meets the second criterion. It certainly contains the element of judgment as Job’s character comes under judgment. This is closely related to the fourth criterion wherein Yahweh and השתן have a discussion regarding Job’s fate, and while the specific actions taken against Job are not laid out in either passage, limitations are set that give some insight into what will be done to Job. It is also clear that the fifth criterion has been met in that Yahweh is specifically named and demonstrated to be the one in authority throughout the discussion. Since this passage contains all five criteria required to be a Council of Yahweh text, it will be considered further in this study.

Problems with בני האלהים

Particularly relevant to this study is Parker’s claim that all references to בני האלהים refer to the Council of Yahweh. This assumption needs to be questioned on two fronts. The first step is to explore whether the phrase בני האלהים is in fact a generic phrase meaning divine council in all its occurrences. The second is to explore whether all the occurrences of בני האלהים refer to the Council of Yahweh. Genesis, Psalms, Job,

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5 These introductory paragraphs are adapted from White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 39-40.

6 This hypothesis derives mostly from the Ugaritic parallels. The idea is that this phrase has become synonymous with the divine council in Ugarit so that it no longer can be used to describe actual paternity and thus it always refers to a divine council. For a particularly explicit description of this see Parker, "Sons of (the) God(s)," 794-96.
Deuteronomy, and Daniel all contain this phrase or a version of this phrase.⁷

*Bn il* is a Ugaritic phrase that parallels יַעֲשֵׂהוּ בָּנִי הַאֱלֹהִים and means “the children of El.”⁸

*Bn il* or *bn ilm* also can be found in conjunction with *phr* (assembly).⁹ The resulting combination could either be translated “the assembly of the children of the gods” or as “assembly of divine beings.” The chief god, El, uses the term *bny* as a way of referring to the other gods in CAT 1.16 V 24. One theory is that the phrase *bn il* has become an idiomatic phrase to refer exclusively to a divine council. Parker says, “The use of the expression ‘the father of the divine beings’ to refer to El tends to support the suggestion above that the phrase translated literally ‘the children of El’ was already so idiomatic a term for the collectivity of the gods that it no longer conveyed the fatherhood of El, but was simply a periphrasis for ‘god,’ i.e. ‘divine beings.’”¹⁰ If this were so, then *bn il* would only identify the being as a god, but could express nothing about the actual...

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⁷ Gen 6:2-4; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Dan 3:25; Deut 32:8 in the Qumran texts and the Septuagint; Psalms 82:6 (udadim); Psalms 29:1; 89:7 (בֵּית אֵל); cf. White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 39-40.

⁸ The references in the Ugaritic literature can be found in both poetic and religious texts (3 poems and 2 religious texts; CAT 1.17 VI 28-29; 1.10 I 3; 1.4 III 13-14; 1.47 29; 1.148 9; 1.65 1-3; 1.40). A similar term appears only once in Phoenician as *kl dr bn ʾlm* (KAI 26 AIII 19) and is usually translated to mean “the whole circle of divine beings.”

⁹ Related phrases include *phr kkhm*, which means “the assembly of the stars” and *dr dt šmnm*, which means “the circle of those in the Heavens.” These phrases indicate that at Ugarit the gods have a connection to the stars. There may be parallels in the Hebrew Bible. For example, in Job 38:7 the parallelism between stars and the sons of god is reminiscent of the Ugaritic association of them with astrological bodies. This parallelism can be seen in several ways. The first is that both councils were present at creation (cf. Gen 1:26). The purpose of both groups is to celebrate the creator god, as is evident here and in the *Enuma Elish*. Psalm 29 presents a similar function for the sons of god and their purpose of glorifying the high god. The “Host of Heaven” is sometimes used to represent celestial bodies: the sun, moon, planets, and stars (Deut 4:19; Psalms 148:2-3). Sometimes it refers only to the stars (Deut 17:3; 2 Kgs 23:5; Jer 8:2). In this understanding the host of Heaven were worshipped by some in Israel (2 Kgs 21:3, 5; 2 Chron 33:3, 5; Jer 8:2; 19:13) and there was an altar for them in the Jerusalem temple (2 Kgs 21:5). The worship of the Host of Heaven became associated with the worship of foreign gods (Deut 17:3; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3; 23:4-5; Jer 19:13; Zeph 1:4-5). This astralized concept of the Hosts of Heaven retains its connections to references to Yahweh’s hosts (Psalms 103:19-21; 148:1-5; Dan 8:9-13) and the divine beings of other ancient Near East cultures.

¹⁰ Parker, "Sons of (the) God(s)," 795.
paternity of the being. Paternity would require the use of another phrase.

The reference to בֵּן-הַאֲלָהָם in the biblical texts has its own interpretive issues. Even if one does not interpret it to mean a class of beings, one still has to determine whether the second noun in the construct chain is God or gods. A grammatical possibility is that in the MT הַאֲלָהָם refers to a single deity by using El combined with an enclitic mem. Yet, those who argue for a plural understanding are not necessarily denying a chief god. Smith says, “The mythological texts may present El as the head of the divine assembly, but the terminology embedded in the expressions for assembly here might not refer specifically to him.” Therefore, one could not call the divine council the assembly of the gods without suggesting that it was under the leadership of the high god.

To demonstrate further that בֵּן-הַאֲלָהָם in the Hebrew Bible is merely a phrase meaning divine beings but not the name of the Council of Yahweh, I will explore two texts in which the phrase is used in some form and demonstrate how they are not divine council texts. Genesis 6 and Daniel 3 clearly demonstrate that the phrase is used to describe divine beings in settings outside the Council of Yahweh, and thus the presence of the phrase alone cannot define a certain text as belonging to the collection of divine council narratives.

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11 Smith, Origins of Biblical Monotheism, 41.

Smith further states that the expression may be used for a group of gods that gathers around a particular divine figure: Ibid., 42. This would explain why there are some references to the assembly of Ba’al or Ditanu. It also accounts for the texts in which El is specifically mentioned. One of these groups on their own does not comprise the Pantheon, but it is the groups in collaboration that make up the general pantheon.

12 Smith further states that the expression may be used for a group of gods that gathers around a particular divine figure: Ibid., 42. This would explain why there are some references to the assembly of Ba’al or Ditanu. It also accounts for the texts in which El is specifically mentioned. One of these groups on their own does not comprise the Pantheon, but it is the groups in collaboration that make up the general pantheon.

13 This also has implications for the discussion of monotheism. I addressed this in my Th.M. thesis is more detail; see, White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 40-42 reproduced in Appendix A.
**Genesis 6:1-4.** Genesis 6:1-4 is a good example of not referring to a divine council. Canonically, this is the first appearance of the phrase בֵּית הַאֲלָדוֹת in the MT and the passage details the interaction of these divine beings and human women. These beings are paralleled to the בְּנֵי אָדָם, daughters of humans (i.e., human females).

This mating requires a response from Yahweh (v. 3) and resulted in the Nephilim (Num 13:33), a race of heroes and warriors (v. 4). Gen 6:1-4 is ambiguous. Sarna says, “The account given in these few verses is surely the strangest of all the Genesis narratives. It is so full of difficulties as to defy certainty of interpretation. The perplexities arise from the theme of the story, from its apparent intrusiveness within the larger narrative, from its extreme terseness, and from some of its vocabulary and syntax.”

This complex passage is usually dated to the traditional J source and based on even earlier traditions, which would make it the oldest reference to בֵּית הַאֲלָדוֹת in Hebrew narrative.

The identity of the sons of god has long been debated, but generally fall into three categories: 1) divine beings of one kind or another; 2) powerful men (e.g., kings, rulers, etc.); 3) holy men, such as Seth. Theories within the first category are by far the most common, and based on the earlier discussion regarding the nature of this phrase, it is the

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16 One of the biggest reasons for suggesting human beings are the “sons of god” is a general discomfort with the concept of divine beings engaging in sexual activities; however, there is no reason to assume that this discomfort was ever felt by the author(s) of this text, especially considering the plethora of material within the Hebrew Bible that does not conform to modern sensibilities.

17 Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 139.
most likely. There are three main reasons why this theory dominates: 1) Every other time the phrase is used in the Hebrew Bible, it means divine beings. This interpretation best fits the grammar of the phrase. The reason for this is that when a noun is paired with the term (נָּצִים) it is a means of indicating multiple members within the noun group. This adjectival genitive form is seen in multiple places in the Hebrew Bible with this usage. In these cases, the translation in not confused or debated. Thus in Gen 19:38, the “sons of Ammon” should be translated as “Ammonites” and in Exod 2:25 the “sons of Israel” should be translated as “Israelites.” Likewise, the “sons of God,” should be translated as “gods.” 2) If “sons of god” is actually supposed to mean “sons of some men,” one not only loses the contrast, but it is a very strange way to phrase “the sons of some men married the daughters of other men”; 3) The use of this phrase in other ancient Near East cultures is specific to the pantheon.

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18 Early support comes from 1 Enoch 6:2; Jubilees 5:1; LXX; Philo (De Gigant 2:358); Josephus (Ant. 1.31); 1QapGen 2:1; CD 2:17-19; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6, 7; Justin; Irenaeus; Clement of Alexandria; Tertullian, and Origen.

19 Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 139.

20 B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §9.5.3b (#17-19). This section represents a reworking of White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 40.

21 E.g., Pentateuch: Gen 17:12; 19:38; 25:3, 13, 16; Exod 2:25; 3:9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15; 4:31; 5:14, 15, 19; 6:5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13; 9:4, 6, 26, 35; 10:20, 23; 11:10; 12:28; 16:1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15, 17, 35; 17:1; Lev 7:34, 36, 38; 9:3; 10:11; 23:24, 34, 43, 44; Num 1:2; 3:12, 18, 19, 20; 25, 30; 14:2, 7; 15:2; 17:6; Deut 2:19; 4:44; 9:2; 10:6; 32:8; DtrH: Josh 3:9; 4:8, 12, 21; 5:1; 9:17, 18, 26; 12:1, 2, 6, 7; 15:20; 20:2, 9; 24:32; Judg 1:1, 8, 9; 3:13, 14, 15; 10:6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17; 13:1; 20:1, 3, 7, 13, 23, 24, 26; 1 Sam 7:4, 7; 14:51; 2 Sam 7:6, 7; 12:26; 1 Kings 6:1, 13; 12:17; 18:20; 20:27; 2 Kings 17:7, 8, 9, 22; Prophets: Isa 56:6; 60:10; Jer 2:16; 3:21; 9:25; 16:15; 32:30, 32; 40:11, 14; 49:6; 50:33; Ezek 16:26; 21:25; 23:7, 9, 12, 23; 35:5; Hos 2:2; 3:5; Joel 4:6; Amos 1:13; 9:7; Obad 12, 20.

22 For an example of a Bible translation that does translate these phrases this way see the NIV; cf. White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 39-40.

23 Wenham notes that this interpretation is even less likely because the reference to “human” in the first verse is clearly intended to refer to the whole human race: Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 140.
One important reason to view this phrase as a generic reference to gods is that this story fits within the standard biblical condemnation of boundary violations. In this case the boundary is between divine and human. The pattern runs throughout Genesis (cf. the Tree of Knowledge, the Tower of Babel, etc.). Boundary violations can also be found throughout biblical law (e.g., crop mixing, Lev 19:19; mixed clothing, Deut 22:9-11), particularly when it comes to procreation: e.g., sex with animals (Lev 20:16) and inter-marriage with non-Israelites (Deut 7:3) are all prohibited and carry serious consequences. Thus Wenham says, “It therefore follows that unions between the ‘sons of the gods’ and human women must be at least as reprehensible, for in this case both parties must know it is against the will of the creator who made the world so that everything should reproduce ‘according to its kind’ (1:11-12, 21, 24-25).”

Thus humans marrying humans would not be a boundary violation according to kind, but divine beings engaging in sexual conduct resulting in offspring would certainly violate the notion of mixing according to kind. The obvious connection between the name Nephilim and the verb נפל is apparent, but this connection has stumped commentators. Yet, if one understands the narrative to be detailing the boundary violation between Heaven and Earth, which is a consistent concern in Genesis, then the name enforces the notion that despite being the heroes of Earth, their attempts to reach into Heaven will fail/fall. Wenham further suggests that the narrative could also serve as a polemic against the fertility cults that encourage marriages between gods and humans.

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24 Ibid., 141.

25 Ibid., 142. Cassuto does not think that this passage actually condemns the actions of אלהים בני for he sees these marriages as legitimate and even if they were not it would be wrong for humans to be punished rather than the gods: Umberto Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: Part One: From Adam to Noah (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 294-95. This punishment may not
This passage does not contain criteria one, three, four, or five and therefore, cannot be considered a Council of Yahweh passage. In order for one to use Gen 6:1-4 for council research it would need to include a deliberation, it would need to take place in Heaven, and most importantly, Yahweh would need to be in charge of הר-האלהים. However, none of these elements are present in the pericope.

Daniel 3. In addition to the example of Gen 6:1-4, in the post-exilic text of Daniel 3, a single הר-האלהים is mentioned. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, has called all be so easily resolved. The entire structure of this passage has baffled scholars for generations, but particularly verse 3, which seems to interrupt the narrative and its connection to the episode is difficult to grasp: Westermann, Genesis 1-11, 366. Cassuto’s understanding of this passage also fits within themes found in Genesis. He sees this as a clarification between human and the divine and the inability of humanity to obtain divinity (cf. Genesis 3). He says, The declaration in v. 3, My spirit shall not abide in man, etc. implies: Do not believe the heathen tales about human beings of divine origin, who were rendered immortal; this is untrue, for in the end every man must die, in as much as he, too, is flesh. The sons that were born from the intercourse of the sons of God with the daughters of men were, in truth, gigantic and mighty, yet they did not live forever, but had long ago become extinct. And when they lived, it is on the earth that they lived; even before their descent to Sheol, they were never translated to heaven. They were men of renown; indeed, men of renown, but even so they were men, not more than men: Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, 300.

Regardless whether one agrees with Cassuto’s analysis, his point that this narrative is designed as a condemnation of foreign beliefs is important. He says, “Among the ancient people, as we know, various myths were current telling of sexual relations between gods and daughters of men, and of the children born from these unions, who were regarded as half-gods or were raised to the full status of deities. Also among the Canaanites, who were closest to the Israelites, there existed legends of this kind, as the Ugaritic inscriptions testify”: Cassuto, A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, 299. It is precisely this type of belief that Gen 6:1-4 would have been designed to combat and therefore, would not refer to the Council of Yahweh. This type of polemic against the mythology of other ancient Near Eastern cultures is prevalent within the prologue of Genesis.

Could here be the bn il or at the very least divine beings from other ancient Near Eastern cultures? While there are several different interpretations of the identity of these beings, which range from disobedient (fallen) angels to human beings of other cultures, these arguments seem to ignore the basic grammatical structure of the construct chain and therefore, I will not discuss them at length. However, the interpretation presented here is merely a possibility and has been presented as an illustration of the need to use caution in regards to making assumptions about the phrase הר-האלהים. A recent analysis of these possibilities can be found in Sven Fockner, “Reopening the Discussion: Another Contextual Look at the Sons of God,” Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 32 (2008), 435-56. Westermann states that the original setting for this passage has to be Canaanite: Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 369. This would lead one to conclude that this passage is a polemic against the behavior of the gods of the other culture. They are related to human beings, but have no relationship to Yahweh, other than judgment. This lowers the status of other gods. This would be a very different conclusion than if this council represented the divine beings under the rule of Yahweh.
the officials of his realm to him to dedicate a golden image he had made in homage to himself (vv. 1-3). At this ceremony Nebuchadnezzar orders all (“O peoples, nations, and people of every language”) to bow down and worship this image or else face the fiery furnace (vv. 4-7). Three Jews in administrative power, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refused to bow to the image, as to do so would violate their dedication to their god (vv. 12-18). The king was true to his word and cast the three men into the furnace (vv. 19-23). Thinking he was about to watch three men burn to death, the king suddenly realized that four walked among the flame and he exclaims, “Look! I see four men loosed and walking about in the midst of the fire without harm, and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods” (v. 25). It is clear that this passage does not meet any of the criteria for a council text, no heavenly setting, no judgment, no discussion, no Yahweh, and yet a derivative of the phrase is used.

This passage in Dan 3:25 complicates the issue of הֵאָלֶהִים בֵּנֶי because it is the only reference in the Old Testament to a singular “son of god” and it is Aramaic. It is clear that the reference is to a generic divine figure and thus one should assume that הֵאָלֶהִים בֵּנֶי is the generic term for gods and not the Council of Yahweh nor a group within the council (i.e., it is the name of the council rather than a position). One might assume that Nebuchadnezzar, a foreign king, can recognize a divine being, a god, and yet not know enough about the construction of Yahweh’s council to identify the member by function or title.27 He knows enough to say, “oh look, a god,” but not enough to expand on this claim and therefore would use a generic term to refer to the being. This in itself points to the

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27 This would assume that the statement in the text is an accurate rendering of what Nebuchadnezzar actually said and that would be difficult to demonstrate. However, even if it is the imaginative iteration of the Israelite author this would not necessarily negate the generic nature of the phrase. The author would be portraying the perspective/character of a foreign king.
generic nature of the phrase rather than a specific council reference.

In verse 28, this אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים הָיָה is referred to as “his messenger,” which has led to the interpretation that this is מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה. If this were so, one could understand the reference as initially to a generic counsellor with the second reference being the position that the counsellor holds. While this would fit together neatly, it is not as simple as this. In Council of Yahweh settings מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה is usually not the one who delivers messages. Rather, other characters involved with the council are seen to deliver messages (cf. רוח in 2 Kings 22 and the prophets). Furthermore, one can be מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה without being a messenger of the Council of Yahweh.

This demonstrates that at least in one text this phrase is not used as a generic means of referring to a Council of Yahweh. In addition, it does not meet any of the five criteria. No one is being judged, no dialogue is taking place since there is only one divine being, it is not set in Heaven, and Yahweh is not seen presiding over the meeting (as none is taking place). Thus, in the face of this overwhelming evidence, one cannot consider this a divine council passage, and therefore cannot rely solely on terminology to determine a council.

To summarize this section, since the phrase בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים is used to represent divine beings, this is a logical place to begin the study of the Council of Yahweh. However, one needs to be careful precisely because it is a generic term for divine beings. When used to refer to a divine council, one needs to be cautious since the second term in the construct

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28 This is very different from the role that the messenger gods play in Ugarit. In the Ugaritic texts the messenger gods carry messages from one god to another (e.g., CAT 1.2 I.11; 1.2 I.17-19, 33-35; 1.3 III.8-14; 1.4 VII.52): Lowell K. Handy, Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 159. In the Hebrew Bible מֶלֶךְ יְהוָה more often than not is playing the role of court official; see Zechariah 3 for example.
chain is not the name of the chief deity, which means the term could refer to any divine
council or just gods in general. This is a very important difference between the texts at
Ugarit. Because the construction at Ugarit usually involves the personal name for a god
(e.g., El, Ba’al, etc.) there is little confusion as to what council is being spoken about, but
the parallel also demonstrates that there can be multiple councils within a set of
mythological texts. Therefore, the possibility of more than one divine council present in
the Hebrew Bible needs to be explored. One cannot assume that when בני האלהים appear
as a council in the Old Testament that the reference is to the Council of Yahweh.

**Multiple Divine Councils**

**Deuteronomy 32**

The possibility of a divine council, other than Yahweh’s, being included in the
literary tradition of the religion of Israel is introduced in the case of Deut 32:8 in the texts
at Qumran (4QDeut) and in the Septuagint (LXX). In this verse, UPPER the peoples of the Earth according to the number of בני האלהים. This is different than the MT,
which has the “sons of Israel” as the preserved text. Tov and Smith interpret the
discrepancy as the result of monotheistic redactors. Nelson concurs and sees this as part
of a larger pattern of censorship. Following the principle of lectio difficilior, one needs
to consider בני האלהים in this passage. Reading בני האלהים in this passage, each of the
nations of the Earth received their territory and their national god from UPPER UPPER and Israel

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was given Yahweh. It is clear that this version of the narrative fits some of the criteria for being a council. The chief god is present, as are other deities, and the fate of the nations is being determined, which are the defining features for a divine council scene. It is equally clear that this divine council is not under Yahweh’s authority, nor is it clear where this meeting is set (Heaven or Earth). Therefore, if one accepts the text from Qumran and the Septuagint, then the Hebrew Bible would contain references to more than one divine council.

It is common to view אלהים עלים in this passage as another name for Yahweh, which would mean that Yahweh divides the peoples of the world according to the number of the gods and keeps Israel for himself. While the Hebrew term אלהים is often used as an epithet for Yahweh, especially in biblical poetry, it is also commonly used in other ancient Near East religious traditions. Thus one does not need to assume that אלהים in this passage is Yahweh, especially since אלהים is the proper divine name for the chief god of Ugarit. Tigay summarizes the issue this way:

It is combined with el, ‘God,’ in the phrase el elyon, ‘God Most High.’ It is used by Israelites and non-Israelites, and also appears in non-Israelite sources. ‘Most High’ is an ideal epithet for God. In the present verse it emphasizes His supremacy over the other divine beings, and since it does not have exclusively Israelite associations it suits the context of God’s organizing the human race as a whole. Verse 9, relating to God’s selection of Israel, reverts to the specifically Israelite name YHVH.

Tigay makes a very important point when he demonstrates that אלהים was a wide-spread

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title for the chief god, but his assumption that it is used to refer to Yahweh is not necessary. It is clear from verse 9 that the author feels free to use the name Yahweh, and while it is possible that the same god is meant in both verses, this is not made explicit in the text.

Verse 8 is not the only verse in the song to have textual issues that relate to the current topic. In 4QDeut⁴, Deut 32:43 comprises 6 lines (as opposed to the MT’s 4 lines) and includes a reference to הנב נב in the second line, which is not found in the MT. The Old Greek versions fall somewhere between the rendering found at Qumran and in the MT. Nelson views this as an interpretive act on behalf of the translators. He says, “The orthodox revision represented by MT eliminated this reference to pagan gods (cf. Psa 97:7). OG¹² translates ‘gods’ interpretively as ‘sons of God,’ while OG³⁴ renders it as ‘angels’ (cf. Psa 97:7 LXX; Heb 1:6).”⁵ Nelson views this as an interpretive act on behalf of the translators. He says, “The orthodox revision represented by MT eliminated this reference to pagan gods (cf. Psa 97:7). OG¹² translates ‘gods’ interpretively as ‘sons of God,’ while OG³⁴ renders it as ‘angels’ (cf. Psa 97:7 LXX; Heb 1:6).” Biddle notes that despite the MT’s privileged position in Judaism and its use for most Christian translations of the Hebrew Bible that it does not present the oldest version of the Song of Moses.⁶ Again the best arguments favour the rendering found at Qumran as the most authentic (i.e., oldest).⁷ This argument is based on lectio difficilior, and while it violates the principle of lectio brevior, it seems the length is merely a reflection of editing out difficult pieces within the text rather than adding them in. Biddle puts it this way, “LXX and Q seem to reflect a much more archaic theology than does MT. Since it is difficult to imagine why copyists and translators would introduce apparent polytheism into the song, it is likely that the scribes

⁴ Nelson, Deuteronomy, 379.

⁵ Mark E. Biddle, Deuteronomy (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary 4; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2003), 469.

⁶ Ibid., 481.
who produced MT expunged all references to ‘sons of God,’ indeed, even to the
‘heavens’ in order to produce a theologically ‘unobjectionable’ text.”38 In addition,
4QDeut4 and the LXX represent parallelismus membrorum, which is characteristic of
Hebrew poetry, but this feature is noticeably absent in the MT (cf. line 3 and the
overbalance in lines 5-7).39

Psalm 82
A similar problem is found in Psalm 82. In this psalm, Yahweh is associated with
בֵּית אֱלֹהִים, but the association makes a distinction between Yahweh and the divine
beings rather than assimilating the two.40 The council is charged by God with not
fulfilling its duties regarding humanity (v. 2) and instructed to implement social justice
(v. 3). This god recognizes the divinity of these beings (v. 6), but then claims they will
die, which could place them into the category of humans (v. 7).41 The psalm ends with a
refrain that encourages god to take on the role of judge, as it is his rightful position. The
legal context of this psalm is apparent and expected of divine council narratives.42

One theory is that בֵּית אֱלֹהִים here are not gods, but rather human judges. This
theory is based on the references in Exod 21:6; 22:6-7, 8, 27; and 1 Sam 2:25, where

38 Ibid., 482; cf. Christensen, Deuteronomy, 813.

39 Biddle, Deuteronomy, 482.

40 It should be noted that the insertion of Yahweh here is an interpretation since the divine name
does not occur in this psalm. This is not unexpected since the psalm occurs in the Elohist psalter, but it
could lead to even further confusion over the characters involved within these verses. Smith concurs with
this understanding: Mark S. Smith, The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background

41 Though this is not necessarily the case as there are examples of gods who die in ancient
mythology: Marvin E. Tate, Psalm 51-100 (Word Biblical Commentary 20; Dallas: Word, 1990), 338.

42 For the legal context see Richard Clifford, Psalms 73-150 (Abingdon Old Testament
Commentaries; Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 64-65.
there is instruction to bring the case before אלהים even though the context is the temporal court. Yet, this is not the best possible understanding. This phrase should be translated as “divine beings” or simply “gods.” Terrien points out the likeliness of this possibility when he states, “Ancient witnesses and some modern interpreters, Jewish and Christian, believe that the gods are human magistrates and other administrators of high rank, princes, or even priests, but the psalmist clearly distinguishes between gods or sons of God and human judges since he announces later on that these gods are going to die, just like men and princes (v. 7).” Tate furthers this point by explaining that the context of אלהים in the earlier passages is unclear and the arguments for אלהים as humans are stretched. He also argues, “The judgment on the gods has some similarity to the rather widespread mythical imagery of the revolt and punishment of a god. A god could be killed if he became rebellious and failed to carry out his functions; as, for example, Kingu in Enûma eliš (4.119-28); We-ila in Atra-Ḥasis (1.4.123-24).” This would mean that these beings could be gods and yet still suffer the punishment of death for having failed in their duties.

Thus, the interpretation of these beings as human is inappropriate, and one must look elsewhere to determine their identity. It is clear that these beings are divine. However, this does not mean that these are divine beings within Yahweh’s service.

Several scholars have proposed that this divine council comprises the gods of other

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45 Tate, *Psalm 51-100*, 341.

46 Ibid., 338.
nations. Terrien speculates that these gods were not familiar with the rules of Israel. He says,

Could it be that foreign gods, living in the splendor of great cities and enjoying the power of military supremacy, do not know how to live in a coherent society? They march on tenebrous roads (Prov 2:13); worse still, they find perverse pleasure in choosing tortuous paths (Prov 2:15). Their ignorance is itself the cause of their misdeeds, for it prevents them from comprehending the complexity and the simplicity of social ethics. . . . Divinity was held to be shared by beings other than Yahweh, but the psalmist maintained that unethical “divinity” loses its divine character. . . . The gods of the nations may be “the sons of the Most High,” but their divine filiality will not protect them from annihilation.\footnote{Terrien, \textit{The Psalms}, 589-90.}

This thought is echoed by Rogerson and McKay, who say, “In this case, the psalm asserts the power of the God of Israel over these other ‘gods’. . . . God, surrounded by his heavenly court, rises to pronounce judgment on the gods of the nations.”\footnote{J. W. Rogerson and J. W. McKay, \textit{Psalms 51-100} (The Cambridge Bible Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 164.} Dahood also views these beings as the gods of foreign nations, rather than the Council of Yahweh. He says, “the psalmist had been under the impression that the pagan deities were of some importance, but now realizes that they are nothing.”\footnote{Mitchell Dahood, \textit{Psalms II: 50-100: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary} (Anchor Bible 17; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 270.} This is a reasonable interpretation as it is clear that Yahweh is positioned in opposition to אלהים. This is in sharp contrast to all the Council of Yahweh texts that will be discussed in the next chapter. It also would work well as a corrective to those who may be inclined to follow the religious tradition of the other nations.

One of the interesting features of this passage is that Yahweh claims to have thought at one time that these beings were immortal gods, but now he knows better. It
has been explained away as an element of irony, and therefore should not be taken as a lack of knowledge or lack of understanding on the part of God. Parker’s analysis is good when he says,

Thus the heavenly beings are here again the gods, generally believed to be the rulers of the world. The psalm’s purpose is to expose their total failure as governors—more specifically to have Yahweh expose that failure. For this purpose Yahweh is rhetorically portrayed as having formerly shared general beliefs about the gods. But Yahweh is also the one who exposes their true nature and announces their demise, and the one who in the last verse of the psalm is acclaimed as their successor, governor of the world and their heir to all the nations. Thus Ps 82 rhetorically acknowledges the gods’ claims to be rulers of the nations, but does so only to demonstrate their failure and the justice of Yahweh’s replacing them as ruler of the world.

If this exegesis is correct then one must assume that this is not Yahweh’s council, and therefore that there are at least two councils in the biblical texts.

This psalm reads like a standard meeting of a divine council, but is different in that suddenly the council itself is put on trial. One might object to foreign elements being contained within a council trial. However, it is not unusual for foreign elements to be present for judgment within the Council of Yahweh: Job is a non-Israelite and the beasts in Daniel 7 represent foreign nations/rulers.

Multiple councils could cause confusion when one is trying to develop an Israelite

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50 Parker, "Sons of (the) God(s)," 797.

51 Ibid.

52 Morgenstern and O’Callaghan view this text as a compilation. In their opinion, verse one is distinct from what follows and verse one may refer to a divine being, but the successive verses refer to human judges: J. Morgenstern, "The Mythological Background of Psalm 82," *Hebrew Union College Annual* XIV (1939), 31; R. J. O'Callaghan, "The Canaanite Background of Psalm 82," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 15 (1953), 312.

53 Tate, *Psalm 51-100*, 335.

54 This will be explored in greater detail in the next Chapter, see pages 90-91.
concept of the divine council and one must ensure that s/he is not combining the concept of the council of other nations with the council of Yahweh. Therefore, while the phrases נבצרת אלהים or בני האלוהים can indicate a divine council and could be helpful in identifying divine council texts, they should not be used blindly and without careful critical analysis regarding the context and presentation.

ארמנים השמיים

An additional phrase to consider is צבא השמיים, “Host of Heaven,” which occurs approximately 200 times. Because of the frequency of this phrase not all occurrences are examined. There are clearly times when this term is used to refer to gods. For example in Psa 103:21, the Host of Heaven are paralleled to his (Yahweh’s) servants, the mighty ones, and המלאכים. Similarly, Psa 148:2 has the Hosts paralleled to המלאכים. However, neither of these passages contains discussion or judgment, and therefore do not contain divine councils. Yet, there are also times when it refers to Yahweh’s military or to objects of worship.55 Taylor claims that this phrase is complex because there are more than one צבא השמיים and because the understanding of this collection has developed and changed over the time periods reflected in the texts.56 Nonetheless, there are two passages that should be evaluated in terms of the Council of Yahweh: 1 Kings 22 and Isaiah 6.


1 Kings 22

In this passage, the kings of Israel and Judah meet to discuss what they should do about Ramoth-gilead, disputed territory currently in the hands of Aram (vv. 1-4).

Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, requests the opinion of the prophets, so the king of Israel calls in 400 prophets and inquires whether or not the kings should go to war (vv. 5-6). The prophets respond in the affirmative, but Jehoshaphat is not convinced and asks for a “prophet of the LORD” (vv. 6-7). Reluctantly, the king of Israel calls Micaiah ben Imlah, but warns Jehoshaphat that this prophet never gives good messages (v. 8). When Micaiah first arrives before the kings, he prophesies destruction, but the king of Israel complains about this message, and Micaiah has a vision of the Council of Yahweh (vv. 15-19). In this vision, Yahweh is asking his council what they should do about this king of Israel (v. 20). נאם steps forward and volunteers to be a lying spirit in the mouths of the king’s prophets, so that he will go to war and be killed (vv. 21-23), which is exactly what happens as the chapter progresses (vv. 34-37).57

1 Kings 22 demonstrates all five criteria for determining a Council of Yahweh passage, and therefore there should be no doubt regarding its inclusion in this study. Not

57 This pattern is common in the Hebrew Bible, but not universal in the ancient Near East. In the Gilgamesh Epic VII, Anu (the high god) opens the discussion, Enlil makes a proposal, Shamash objects and Enlil wins out. In Atra-Hasis I, Enlil calls the council, both Enlil and Anu make proposals, which are accepted. According to Parker, “In such literary texts the great gods appear free to make proposals, raise objections or state terms without any strict protocol, and the high god seems to exercise rather loose control over the proceedings”: Simon B. Parker, "Council," in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Pieter W. van der Horst and Bob Becking; 2nd ed., Grand Rapids Eerdmans, 1999), 204. These texts present a looser form of council procedure than other texts, particularly those of the Old Testament. A similar form of operation can be seen in Anzu. In this myth the high god calls the councils, presents a problem, and requests a volunteer to solve the problem and then the volunteer is sent out to complete the action. T. Jacobsen describes the Mesopotamian council as a primitive democracy that met during crisis events. He claims the council appointments were for the current time of crisis and were not necessarily ongoing and that all council members, including the high god, were bound by council decisions: T. Jacobsen, "Primitive Democracy in Ancient Mesopotamia," in Toward the Image of Tammus (ed. W. L. Moran; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 157-70; T. Jacobsen, The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 86.
only does it contain the phrase חמשים, it also uses the verb “to stand,” which is common to council scenes.\(^{58}\) Criterion one is met by verse 19, which states that the Lord was sitting on his throne. Verse 20 describes the discussion that took place among various members (with no details) and verses 21-22 provide the decision and the means of implementation, which completes criterion three. Judgment is also clearly present in regards to the King of Israel’s fate, thus fulfilling criterion four. There is no doubt that criterion five is met because Yahweh is mentioned by name, leads the discussion, and ultimately approves the plan.

**Isaiah 6**

While the phrase חמשים does not occur in Isaiah 6, the phrase צבאות does appear, and thus this passage should be considered based on the derivative phrasing and the imagery that appears in the narrative.\(^{59}\) As with the other terminology explored, the phrase alone does not indicate a Council of Yahweh passage, but only the presence of all five criteria does.

Isaiah 6 details the commission of the prophet Isaiah. In this vision, Isaiah sees the Lord sitting on his throne surrounded by שרפים and the scene is depicted as glorious (vv. 1-4). In the midst of this impressive scene, Isaiah claims to be impure of lips and expresses concern about his health because he has seen the Lord while in this state of impurity (v. 5). In response to a שרף cleanses Isaiah’s lips with a hot coal and pronounces him clean (vv. 6-7). The Lord then asks for a volunteer and Isaiah responds

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\(^{58}\) For more information on this verb’s usage, see page 49.

\(^{59}\) It is important that the imagery of a divine council appear alongside the phrase because the phrase is a common enough way of referring to Yahweh. On its own it would not be enough to merit consideration in the current study.
Then God gives Isaiah a task and includes terms for the end of his commission (vv. 9-13).

Rarely is there any discussion as to whether Isaiah 6 contains a Council of Yahweh scene because it is usually assumed, but of all the passages to be considered Council of Yahweh passages, the case for Isaiah 6 is the most debatable. The first criterion is clear in the description of Yahweh’s throne room that introduces the commissioning of Isaiah as an agent. The fulfillment of criterion two is also clear in that multiple divine beings are present, Yahweh and שָׂרֶפֶם. The fourth criterion is present, but the reader only hears about the judgment through the commission given to Isaiah to deliver to the people. The presence of the third criterion is tentative. Verse 8 implies that there are others, with the use of “us” and that they are in agreement with Yahweh, since the volunteer would also be going for them. That beings other than Yahweh are included in “us” is clear by its parallel to “I” in the first stanza. This suggests that there has been a discussion to determine the judgment. Also, the final criterion is clear, as Yahweh is present, in charge, and gives the judgment.

**Additional Plural Deities Passages**

In order to be certain that the list of council texts is complete, it is important to explore the name Yahweh. By looking through the passages where Yahweh occurs, I can determine texts where Yahweh appears in conjunction with other divine beings and then assess whether they fit the other criteria for a council scene. The personal name of God appears 6551 times in the Hebrew Bible (MT), but only 39 in conjunction with other
deities. However, the majority of these passages/verses just contrast the worship of Yahweh to that of other gods or have already been discussed. Gen 18:16-33, Num 22:22-35, 2 Kgs 19:15-19, Psa 103:19-22 all contain some of the criteria for a council text, but none of them contain more than three. Of the 39 passages only Zechariah 3 has the potential to be a Council of Yahweh text and will be explored below. Some mention should also be made of Isaiah 40 since it is often assumed to be a council text. This passage does not contain the five criteria and the theory surrounding its inclusion as a divine council text is stretched at best. Yahweh is present and there is some judgment, but there is no discussion, there is nothing to indicate a heavenly setting, nor is there any indication of the presence of other deities. Finally, Daniel 7 should also be considered based on this criterion because it refers to Yahweh by a pseudonym.

Zechariah 3

Zechariah 3 contains a concern for impurity and a courtroom setting. Despite the

60 Gen 18:16-33; Exod 15:11; 18:11; 34:14-17; Num 22:22-35; 27:16; Deut 4:19; 5:8-10; 10:17; 32:36-43; Josh 24:16; Judg 2:11-19; 3:7; 10:6; 1 Sam 12:9-10; 1 Kgs 8/6-11; 11:2, 4-8, 33; 18:20-40; 22:19-23, 53; 2 Kgs 19:15; 21:3-7; Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Pss 18; 29; 89; 95; 96; 99; 103; 106; Isa 6:1-13; 19:1-4; 24:21; 43:11-13; Ezek 1:4-28; Zeph 1:4-6; 2:11; Zech 3:1-10. Passages that contain both the Spirit of the Lord in conjunction with the Lord have been omitted from this list because of the potential identity confusion due to the interchangeability that often appears in these passages. The identity confusion will be explored in more depth in Chapter Four; see pages 118-20.

61 Gen 18:16-33: Yahweh is present as are other deities and judgment is discussed, but it does not take place in Heaven. Num 22:22-35: Yahweh is present along with another deity and there is an issue of judgment, but it is not in Heaven and there is no discussion. 2 Kgs 19:15-19: the context of this passage is prayer and it does mention Yahweh and other divine beings who are in Heaven. One might argue that judgment is present in Hezekiah’s request for judgment to be made against Sennacherib, but this is not the same as divine beings discussing what the judgment should be. In fact, no discussion is present in this text. Psa 103:19-22: Here Yahweh is in a leadership role, other deities are mentioned, and Heaven is the setting, but there is no discussion of judgment, despite the implication that judgment or the enforcement of judgment is something that these divine beings do.


63 The plural imperatives do not automatically mean a multiplicity of divine beings, which would violate the main polemic of this passage, and there is nothing to reveal the identity of the “voice.”
fact that “to stand” is a fairly common verb in the Hebrew Bible, it is closely tied to the Council of Yahweh. Jeremiah 23 defines a prophet as one who has “stood” in the council. In addition, Meyers and Meyers have demonstrated that this verb is “the most common word in Hebrew literature for reflecting the technical procedures of participating in the Court.”

The scene is set with הָשְׁטַן in the role of prosecutor, מלאך יהוה as the defense attorney, Yahweh as the judge, and the High Priest Joshua as the defendant (3:1). The scene starts with הָשְׁטַן trying to make an accusation, but the Lord silences him (3:2). The reason given is that Joshua is a “brand plucked from the fire.” However, the scene then turns its full attention on Joshua as he is standing in the Council of Yahweh in a state of impurity (3:3). Joshua has his impure garments removed, is pronounced clean by יהוה, and granted new clothing and a turban (3:4-5). The vision closes with the commissioning of Joshua (3:7-10).

There is no question that Zechariah 3 meets all five criteria for a Council of Yahweh text. Granted the passage does not explicitly say that it is set in Heaven, but the courtroom motif is clear, and it is likely that the “he” in verse one is a divine being. These things combined suggest that this takes place in Heaven, thus meeting criterion one. The second criterion is met by the presence of multiple deities: מלאך יהוה, הָשְׁטַן, and Yahweh. To fulfill criterion three, discussion takes place in the council, among the characters הָשְׁטַן, מלאך יהוה, and Yahweh. Joshua (perhaps as a representative for the nation) is clearly the object of judgment, fullfilling criterion four. Again, Yahweh is named and is responsible for the decision of the court, which fulfills criterion five.

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Daniel 7

Daniel 7 is the first in a series of visions in the Book of Daniel and contains a coded divine council scene. The chapter is set during the reign of King Belshazzar of Babylon and details the dream/vision that Daniel had while lying in bed. The vision begins with the appearance of three beasts, who resembled recognizable animals, but each deviated from the temporal form of the animal in some way (e.g., walking upright, wings, etc.). When the fourth beast appears no natural comparison can be made and the vision turns to the ten horns of this beast. Following the appearance of the beasts, a royal divine court is set up, and the Ancient of Days appears. Once the court and the retinue are arranged, the books are open and judgment takes place. The horned beast is slain and burned, the others are allowed to live but their dominions are taken away. Dominion is transferred to One like a Son of Man, along with glory and kingship, and his dominion will be everlasting. At this point Daniel is afraid and confused and approaches one of the attendants to request an interpretation.

The passage fits within the definition of a divine council as it uses the verb “to stand,” and it explicitly claims to be a court in verse 10. The setting is clearly Heaven, which meets criterion one, as the throne is once again present, and the citizens of Heaven are surrounding the scene, which meets criterion two. Criterion three is absent. There is no discussion present in the pericope, but the presence of “the court” implies that the judgment was made by it. There are two judgment issues before the court in this passage, the beasts’ fate and the pronouncement on the One like a Son of Man. This would fulfill criterion four. There may be dispute surrounding criterion five as Yahweh is never named, but rather the court is presided over by the Ancient of Days. Thus for now it will be considered among the Council of Yahweh texts, but it will be important to establish in
Chapter Three that the Ancient of Days is indeed Yahweh.

The phrase **הַאֲלָהִים** is not the only one that sometimes denotes multiple divine beings. The term **סְד** refers to the Council of Yahweh specifically six times (Psa 89:8; 25:14; Jer 23:18, 22; Job 15:8; Amos 3:7), twice it implies it (Num 13:10; Neh 3:6), and there are two references that are debatable (Job 29:4-5; Prov 3:32). Its use also appears to be unique to Israel. For the most part these passages do not deal with individual members of the council, but refer to the entire collection. Yet, this does not mean that this term cannot be useful for the study of Council of Yahweh membership. In fact, it is through this word that one of the key passages for understanding the relationship between humanity and the Council of Yahweh is identified (Jer 23:18, 22; cf. Amos 3:7).

One additional term that could be used to identify divine council texts is **דֹּרְךָ**. In the MT, Amos 8:14 is pointed as **דֹּרְךָ** but Neuberg has argued that it should be pointed as **דֹּרְךְָו** meaning ("your pantheon"). This translation fits with the consonantal text and

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65 Cf. page 149, n. 80.

66 The implied texts and the debatable texts are so tenuous that one would need to use extreme caution with any conclusions based on these textual understandings. For arguments in support of this hypothesis see Parker, "Council," 207. Related terms can be found in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Phoenician. Akk. *puḫur ilānī* and Ug. *pfr* (*bn*) *ilm* = assembly of the gods; Akk. *pfr m ‘d* = assembly of the meeting; Akk. *mpḥr ‘l* *gbl qdšm* = the assembly of the holy gods of Byblos; Ug. *dr* (*bn*) *il* = circle of the gods; Phoen. *kl dr bn ‘lm* = the whole circle of gods.

67 Ibid., 206.

68 F. J. Neuberg, "An Unrecognized Meaning of Hebrew DOR," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* ix (1950), 215-17. He claimed the same could be said for Pss 14:5; 49:20; 73:15; 84:11; 112:2; Jer 2:31. In addition to this, Ackroyd suggests that Psa 95:10; Prov 30:11-14; Isa 53:8 and Jer 7:19 also be
works in parallel to “your gods” (אלים) mentioned in the preceding bi-colon. While this is an interesting hypothesis, the emended text provides little by way of insight into the membership of the council, and conclusions based on emendations would be tenuous, and therefore, will not be discussed in depth here.

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CHAPTER THREE: EXEGETICAL ISSUES IN COUNCIL OF YAHWEH TEXTS

Introduction

The preceding chapter focused on determining which texts form the corpus of Council of Yahweh texts in the Old Testament. This chapter focuses on an exegesis of those texts. The texts will be explored in the canonical order as issues of dating will not be explored until Chapter Six. The exegesis will explore issues that relate to the council in these passages and summarize the cast of characters to be explored in the following chapter.¹ It is important to remember the criteria for determining a council passage established in the previous chapter: in order to be considered a Council of Yahweh text, multiple deities must be present, the passage must be set in Heaven, a conversation must take place, the purpose of the conversation must be to determine the fate of an individual or a group, and it must contain a plan for enacting the decision.

1 Kings 22

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that 1 Kings 22 met the criteria for being included in the Council of Yahweh corpus. Here Yahweh is mentioned by name and leads the council in Heaven. After a discussion among multiple deities, judgment is made on the King of Israel. Thus all elements of a council text are present.

¹ This chapter does not intend to present a complete exegesis of every passage involved but rather to provide literary context for each piece and raise issues that will be relevant for the subsequent discussion regarding the members of the Council of Yahweh. This means that some interesting though peripheral issues will be left unexplored, but the reader is encouraged to turn to the commentaries listed in the notes and bibliography for more detailed examinations.
Exegesis

Cogan makes two interesting observations regarding prophets in this passage. The first is that the standard battle inquiry phrase בְּיָהוָ֣ה שָאֵל (e.g. Num 27:21; Judg 1:1; 1 Sam 23:2; 30:8) is neglected in favour of יָהּ דְבַר יְהוָה, which is a more generic phrase (cf. 1 Kgs 14:5). He states, “The altered terminology may be associated with the change in the divinatory procedure employed: prophets replace priests as the consultants, and the divine word replaces the mantic oracles.” This is very important in light of the second thing that Cogan notes: this is the earliest reference to prophets being consulted before a battle rather than priests (cf. Num 27:21; 1 Sam 30:7-8). Because of the connection between prophets and the divine council, it would be logical to conclude that the appearance of the council and this shift in accessing God’s will are related.

Walsh points out that the question that the King of Israel asks the 400 prophets is fairly specific, but their response is ambiguous in three ways. He says,

First, the prophets do not name the “lord” who will deliver the victory. Second, there is no direct object for the verb “deliver.” English requires a direct object here, and the NRSV’s “it” clearly points to Ramoth-gilead. The Hebrew, however, does not specify what will be delivered. Third, the prophets do not identify “the king” who will gain the victory either. Ahab certainly understands it to be himself, but the prophets do not in fact say so.

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3 Ibid., 489-90.

4 Ibid., 490.


6 Walsh has a footnote here that states this is based on early manuscripts that contain קֶרֶן rather than יָהּ.

Walsh goes on to say that Jehoshaphat might have picked up on these ambiguities and they prompted his question regarding another prophet. While Walsh does not explicitly say that these ambiguities could mean that the 400 prophets were actually giving the same messages as Micaiah ben Imlah but from the side of the “enemy,” his phrasing certainly suggests this. If this is the case, it presents a very noteworthy reading of this passage. Yet, Walsh points out that verses 10-14 do clarify these ambiguities. In addition, the confrontation between Zedekiah ben Chenaanah and Micaiah ben Imlah is a difficulty this theory does not adequately overcome because it is clear that Zedekiah sees the prophecies in opposition to each other. The legitimacy of these prophets is important for the present study even though they do not appear in the council scene directly.

One very unusual element in the passage is that Micaiah ben Imlah prophesies almost exactly what the 400 prophets prophesy (as the servant encouraged him to), but this time the King of Israel disputes the prophecy. The strangeness of this also appears in the grammar of this passage as Micaiah’s speech interrupts the “overarching waw-consecutive syntactical structure.”

How does Ahab infer that Micaiah is not telling the truth? Is it because Micaiah so predictably prophesied disaster for Ahab in the past (v. 8) that

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8 Ibid.

9 Walsh, 1 Kings, 347. Here Walsh sees ambiguity in another way. He states, “Is it coincidence that Zedekiah (whose name is explicitly Yahwistic: ‘Yahweh is Righteousness’ is the son of ‘Chenaanah’ (Hebrew, kēnaʿănāh)? The continuing problem during Ahab’s reign has been the tendency to blur the distinction between Israelite Yahwism and Canaanite Baalism (including the worship of Asherah), even to merge them into a polytheistic system. Are Ahab’s prophets equally at the service of Yahweh and of Baal or Asherah, depending on which deity the king wishes to consult at any given moment?” (Walsh, 1 Kings, 347, n. 5). Walsh’s point about the prophetic name is well taken, but his solution might be more complex than necessary. Perhaps this theophoric and national naming is indicative of the origin of Israelite religion and that the original religion was indeed polytheistic. Thus, what he sees as blurring is rather a religious stage prior to separation.

10 Iain Provan, 1 and 2 Kings (New International Biblical Commentary; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 255.
a favorable prophecy is automatically suspect? Or should we read between the lines and hear sarcastic intonations in Micaiah’s words? The narrator does not tell us but leaves us with the paradoxical, almost titillating picture of a prophet who has just declared his absolute fidelity to Yahweh’s words apparently prophesying falsely, and a king who has shown himself more interested in approval than in truth demanding truth instead of endorsement.\textsuperscript{11}

Micaiah then reverses his earlier prophecy and confirms the King of Israel’s earlier assessment, but perhaps also reveals that he knows there is no truth in the words of the 400 prophets.

Even stranger, Micaiah’s monologue that follows and details his vision of the heavenly council is unsolicited and almost appears as an interruption in the narrative. This is also unusual because Micaiah reveals things to the King of Israel that presumably should be kept secret from him.\textsuperscript{12} The council scene is all about deceiving the King of Israel into going to battle in order that he may die, but Micaiah then reveals this to the king. What was the point of sending the lying spirits to deceive the king, if Micaiah is going to turn around and reveal the secret to him? One must wonder if רוח in this narrative is the root of the writing prophets’ distaste for the spirit (cf. Mic 2:11; Jer 5:13; Hos 9:7).\textsuperscript{13}

Micaiah’s monologue introduces a new set of characters in the Council of Yahweh: the Hosts of Heaven. Not much is revealed about these characters within this

\textsuperscript{11} Walsh, I Kings, 349.

\textsuperscript{12} Sweeney states, “biblical literature presumes that false prophecy comes from a source other than YHWH (Deut 18:9-22; Jer 23:9-22; 27-28), but works such as Job suggest that YHWH has a treacherous side (cf. 1 Sam 16:14-23). Micaiah’s visionary assertion that YHWH has sent a lying spirit to Ahab challenges the prevailing view that YHWH’s words are true”: Marvin Sweeney, I & II Kings (Old Testament Library; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 260. This is particularly interesting as there are council-related texts on both sides of his paradox.

\textsuperscript{13} Cogan, I Kings, 497.
council narrative, but Cogan hypothesizes that these are the gods of the Canaanite nations. He says, “In Deuteronomistic writings, the heavenly host is the term for the celestial bodies worshipped by the foreign nations (cf., e.g., Deut 4:19; 17:3; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3; Jer 8:2; 19:13; 33:22), forbidden in Israel.”\(^\text{14}\) If this is true, it is important in the discussion of monotheism and the development of Israelite religion. It also would be relevant to why the Council of Yahweh members are referred to mostly by function rather than by name.

This narrative provides further insight into the character of Yahweh within his council. It also introduces a new character, רוח קדוש. This character is named according to its title, witnesses the council, and is involved and thus should be considered for membership in the Council of Yahweh. רוח קדוש is also interesting in light of the parallels between him and Isaiah found in Isaiah 6, which will be explored further in Chapters Four and Six. Other characters also need to be considered: the 400 prophets and Micaiah ben Imlah. The 400 prophets are mentioned and used by the council, but do not witness it or are involved within the council and thus are not members. However, they will be relevant to the discussion regarding agents of the council and thus will be touched on in the following chapter. Micaiah ben Imlah, on the other hand, does witness it, but he is not involved within it. However, he does pass on the council’s message; therefore, his relationship to the council will be explored further in the following chapter.

**Job 1-2**

In the previous Chapter, I determined that Job 1-2 meets all the criteria of a

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 492.
Council of Yahweh passage, and therefore must be considered in any study of this subject. Job 1-2 contains two council scenes that, while similar, contribute different points to an overall understanding of the Council of Yahweh and the characters involved in it, especially השטן.

**Exegesis**

Appendixes B and C contain detailed exegesis of this passage. In these appendixes, I argue that the meeting in Heaven should be understood as a yearly council meeting that likely parallels the end-of-the-year harvest festival. Furthermore, an exploration of the dynamics within the council scene demonstrates that Yahweh is in complete control, from initiating the conversation, to controlling its contents, to approving the plan, and putting limitations on the implementation of the plan. In addition, השטן is not an intruder into the council but a regular council member with a commission to evaluate the piety of human beings in a way similar to Persian spies, Yahweh’s patrolling messengers (Zech 1:10-11), and Yahweh’s roving eyes (Zech 4:10). השטן is not depicted as being in opposition to Yahweh, but rather under his complete control and in his service. While one could argue that there are parallels between השטן and מלאך יהוה regarding an identity confusion with Yahweh, the idea that השטן is merely a literary technique to express an internal dialogue within the mind of Yahweh is not possible to sustain.

Based on that material I conclude that Job 1-2 contributes to the understanding of Yahweh as the chair of the council and also introduces the reader to השטן. Both of these characters will be explored in depth in the next chapter. האלהים בני also are also present in this
scene, but seem to have no individual identity and have already been addressed in the
discussion included in Chapter Two.

**Isaiah 6**

Of all the texts considered Council of Yahweh passages in this study, Isaiah 6 is
the most problematic when it comes to meeting the criteria of council texts. In the last
chapter, several arguments were made in favour of including this passage. The exegesis
of this scene will provide further evidence that this is a Council of Yahweh text and will
give insight into the workings of the council and its cast of characters.

**Exegesis**

A widely held theory is that Isaiah 6 is the call narrative of Isaiah ben Amoz,
perhaps as part of an original memoir that extends into chapter 9; however, this
designation is not universally accepted. Because of this narrative’s position in chapter 6
rather than at the beginning of the book, scholars such as Steck, Seitz and Blenkinsopp,
have questioned whether this truly represents an initial call. Seitz, following Steck, sees
this as a commissioning of the message that Isaiah is suppose to deliver in light of the
Syro-Ephraimite war. Blenkinsopp says,

This vision is often referred to as the call of Isaiah to a prophetic ministry,
but from its position in the book it is clear that this was at least not the
view of the editors who arranged the material. Its location at this point,
together with the knowledge of failure implicit in the conversation during
the visionary experience, suggests rather that it functions in a more limited
way as Isaiah’s commissioning for a specific political mission in
connection with the threat of a Syrian-Samarian invasion in or about the

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15 For the prevalence of this theory see Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12* (trans. Thomas H. Trapp, A

16 Christopher R. Seitz, *Isaiah 1-39* (Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1993); Odil
Blenkinsopp adds that the speech of סרפיםה mirrors Isa 8:18 and thus creates an *inclusio*, which highlights that the call narrative is specific to the conflict that follows. Yet, in an attempt to combat Milgrom’s assertion that chapters 1-5 must pre-date the context of chapter 6 because of the arrangement of the text, Blenkinsopp says, “the editorial arrangement is not exclusively and not even primarily chronological.” This is contradictory logic from what he used in order to claim that chapter 6 does not represent a prophetic call narrative.

Discussion of the formal parallels between this narrative and that found in 1 Kings 22 is also important. Sweeney argues that since 1 Kings 22 does not represent a call narrative for Micaiah ben Imlah, who is clearly already considered a prophet, then this parallel passage in Isaiah 6 would not represent an initial call either. This argument is fallacious. The parallel in the passage is between the two prophets in that they witness the throne scene, but even more so between Isaiah and רוחה. Micaiah merely enters the divine council as an observer, but Isaiah is a participant and volunteer in the same way that רוחה would be. A better parallel for Micaiah ben Imlah would be Zechariah in the scene found in Zechariah 3. In addition, parallels are not formulaic, and one must allow

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18 Ibid., 224.

19 Ibid. Milgrom’s argument can be found in Jacob Milgrom, “Did Isaiah Prophesy During the Reign of Uzziah?,” *Vetus Testamentum* 14 (1964), 164-82.

for an author to take a theme and adapt it for another purpose.\(^{21}\) Yet, there may still be validity in Wildberger’s designation of a “throne council vision,” or better still, Steck’s proposal to view it as “receipt of a commission in a heavenly scene,” though neither of these terms are specific enough for a truly distinct category.\(^{22}\) This argument is strengthened by the numerous parallels between Isaiah 6 and Daniel 7.\(^{23}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Isaiah</th>
<th>Daniel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The date formula</td>
<td>6:1</td>
<td>7:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The throne and its occupant</td>
<td>6:1</td>
<td>7:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The divine beings in attendance</td>
<td>6:2</td>
<td>7:10</td>
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<tr>
<td>The confession</td>
<td>6:5</td>
<td>9:23</td>
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<tr>
<td>The flight of a divine being</td>
<td>6:6</td>
<td>9:21</td>
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<td>The word about understanding</td>
<td>6:9-10</td>
<td>9:23</td>
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<tr>
<td>The touching of the lips</td>
<td>6:7</td>
<td>10:16</td>
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Such a large number of parallels suggests that this is a literary form for Council scenes, especially since Zechariah 3 also contains most of these elements. However, one cannot claim that this is the form of a Council of Yahweh scene as these elements are absent from 1 Kings 22 and Job 1-2.

Regardless of whether Isaiah 6 is an original call or a specific mission call, it contains five of the six features of a call narrative.\(^{24}\) In order, the features are: divine confrontation (vv. 1-2); the introductory word (vv. 3-7); the objection (v. 11a);\(^{25}\) and the

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\(^{21}\) Wildberger, *Isaiah 1-12*, 257.


\(^{23}\) This chart is adapted from Paul L. Redditt, *Daniel* (The New Century Bible Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 115.


\(^{25}\) This interpretation understands the phrase “How long, O Lord” as an objection. Habel cites Moses, Gideon, and Jeremiah, but these characters all object to their own call based on their abilities; however, Isaiah’s “objection” is to the message; see Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 300, 04, 08. This is not a universal interpretation; cf. J. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39* (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 190.
assurance (vv. 11-13). The missing feature is a sign of confirmation. Yet, because chapter 6 is usually considered as a piece within the memoir section, Habel has suggested that the Immanuel sign in chapter 7 fills this void.26 This is less than convincing.

Traditionally this passage is viewed as having two separate parts, the theophany (vv. 1-5) and the commissioning (vv. 6-8 or 6-13).27 Yet, the passage’s structure can be seen as three responses encased in death.28

A. The death of the king (1a)
   B1. Responding to divine holiness (1b-7)
   B2. Responding to the divine concern (8-10)
   B3. Responding to the divine purpose (11-13a)
A. The oak tree cut down (13b)

This structure highlights the three sections of the text and the way in which expectations are reversed by each of the responses. It also highlights Isaiah’s eventual failure to convert his people.

It has long been held that to see God would mean death to the viewer (see Gen 32:30; Exod 19:21; 20:19; 33:20; Deut 18:16; and Judg 13:22). Yet, there are multiple passages that present a counter-tradition (Gen 16:9-13; 28:12-13; Exod 24:9-11; 34:5-10; Judg 6:11-24; 13:22-23), and Moses is said to have known God “face to face” (Deut 34:10), so there is no reason to believe that Isaiah is not able to see the Lord in this scene just because Yahweh is not described.29 However, the fact that have covered their eyes suggests that the two traditions might be merged in this passage.

26 Habel, "The Form and Significance of the Call Narratives," 312.
27 Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 258.
Israel’s refrain is paralleled in Enoch 39:12, but the Enoch passage omits the designation צבאות. Much discussion has focused on the term צבאות and how it should be translated. There are four major proposals: 1) That the term should be translated “hosts,” meaning either the armies of Israel (cf. 1 Sam 17:45), the armies of Heaven, or referring to the Canaanite gods; 2) That it should be translated as “heavenly hosts,” meaning the stars (cf. Judg 5:20; Isa 40:26); 3) That it should be translated as “mightiness” because it is an abstract noun; 4) That it may be best to translate the term as a phrase meaning “surrounded by hosts.” It is less than clear whether or not this term should be considered a synonym for Yahweh’s council; in fact, in all but case four it would not be.

The understanding of צבאות is not the only thing that is uncertain in this passage as it is unclear whether Isaiah represents more than just the prophet. One theory is that Isaiah’s impurity represents the uncleanliness of the entire nation. Oswalt states, “Sinful Israel can become servant Israel when the experience of Isaiah becomes the experience of the nation. When the nation has seen itself against the backdrop of God’s holiness and glory, when the nation has received God’s gracious provision for sin, then she can speak for God to a hungry world.” Thus Isaiah’s commission represents Israel’s

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30 Both verses contain the phrase, “יהוה קדוש קדוש קדוש.”

31 Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary (trans. R. A. Wilson, The Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster 1972), 78. He includes theories 1 and 3 in his second edition of the commentary, but the entire discussion is shortened and he provides no insight as to why the others are no longer considered: Otto Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, A Commentary (trans. John Bowden, 2nd, Completely Rewritten ed., Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 126-27. All references will be to the second edition of this work unless identified otherwise.

32 Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 77.

33 Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah, 174-75.
commissioning. Isaiah is forgiven and chosen, just as Israel is forgiven and chosen. This is a parallel to Zechariah 3, when Joshua stands before the Council of Yahweh and is purified of his sin.\(^{34}\)

That Isaiah is allowed to stand before Yahweh in a state of uncleanness is unexpected. Considering concern for ritual purity in the legal portions of the Hebrew Bible, to have an unclean human stand before God in a state of uncleanness would be taboo. Yet, as Kaiser notes, “Thus Isaiah is removed from the complex of guilt in which his people is involved, so that he can dare to speak in the heavenly council, and show how God can use him as his instrument.”\(^{35}\) Here Yahweh does the unexpected. Even Isaiah expects punishment as he himself cries out his guilt, but despite this expectation God extends mercy and forgiveness. While it is actually the that perform the cleansing ritual, Yahweh’s approval is implicit in his willingness to engage Isaiah after he has been purified. The parallels between this text and Zechariah 3 are abundantly clear.\(^{36}\)

However, the reversal of expectation can also be found in Job 1-2 and 1 Kings 22.

Based on this exegesis, potential council members in Isaiah 6 include Yahweh in the leadership role, and the supporting cast certainly includes the שחרים, who are named, witnesses, and involved and thus will be examined further in the next chapter. Also, since Isaiah is both a witness and involved, his membership will be explored in both Chapters Four and Six.

\(^{34}\) See pages 81-83.

\(^{35}\) Kaiser, Isaiah 1-12, 130.

\(^{36}\) These include an objection based on impurity, the human is the representative, and is commissioned.
Zechariah 3

Zechariah 3 is clearly a Council of Yahweh passage as it contains all the criteria required to be included in the council corpus. It contains multiple deities; Yahweh is named and in charge; an exchange among the characters takes place; and judgment is placed on Joshua (or perhaps all of Israel). Thus it must be examined in greater detail to determine insight into the Council of Yahweh and the characters that participate within it.

Exegesis

My Th.M. thesis exegesis of Zechariah 3 appears in Appendixes D and E. There I explore the reasons for viewing this scene as a judicial one, where Yahweh plays the role of judge, הַשְטֶן the role of prosecutor, יְהֹウェָה the role of defense attorney, and Joshua is the defendant. This is a difference between this narrative and that in Job 1-2, where the council meeting was more akin to a formal committee meeting than a purely judicial hearing, but both are concerned with questions of justice. In his role as prosecutor, הַשְטֶן attempts to object, but is silenced before uttering his objection. It could be that הַשְטֶן is silenced not because his objection is invalid, in fact it is likely accurate, but that הַשְטֶן represents the beliefs of the common people as opposed to those in power, both spiritual and political. The objection itself is probably about Joshua appearing before Yahweh in a state of ritual impurity, but this may have repercussions beyond the character Joshua himself.

Zechariah 3 is Joshua’s call narrative because many elements of this passage reflect other call narratives, especially Isaiah 6.\(^{37}\) Since this narrative represents Joshua’s commissioning as high priest, הַשְטֶן’s objection raises the question as to what the filthy

\(^{37}\) For more on Joshua’s call narrative see Appendix E page 185-186.
Clothes symbolize. Joshua has the priestly lineage that would surely justify making him high priest, but that might be exactly what the problem is for הֶשְׁטָן, since historically the priesthood has been full of wrongdoings and at times rejections. This, in addition to being a returnee, are potential reasons for objecting to Joshua personally. However, Joshua could represent Jerusalem or Israel as a whole. If this were true then, הֶשְׁטָן’s objection here is closer to his question in Job. The objection is about extending mercy to Israel who deserves punishment. Ultimately, Yahweh’s rebuke serves as a means of choosing Joshua and Jerusalem as his own.

Yahweh appears in this scene, which clearly cements his role within the council. Also, the character of הֶשְׁטָן recurs in this passage in a role that is similar to and yet different from his position in Job 1-2. יְהוָה is also named, present, and involved in this scene and thus must be considered in Chapter Four. One additional character appears and must be considered for membership. Joshua does not seem to be involved, but is named and a witness and thus will be examined further in the next chapter.

**Daniel 7**

I previously demonstrated that Daniel 7 meets the criteria for a Council of Yahweh text despite its dramatic difference from the other texts in the corpus thus far. It is thus important to examine the passage more thoroughly in order to determine its contribution to the understanding of the council and those involved.

**Exegesis**

In order to understand Daniel 7, one needs to have insight into the way this chapter functions in the larger work. Chapter 7 is closely tied with the six chapters that
precede it. Redditt and Collins claim that Daniel 2-7 is a chiasm and that the purpose of chapter 7 is to balance out chapter 2.\textsuperscript{38} Collins even recognizes that chapters 3-6 may have originally been independent of 2 and 7, as reflected in LXX version, and that chapters 2 and 7 were added to provide cohesion between the two halves of Daniel.\textsuperscript{39} Redditt breaks the structure into the following parts:\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{itemize}
  \item 2:4b-49 A dream about four world kingdoms replaced by a fifth
  \item 3:1-30 Three friends in the fiery furnace
  \item 4:1-47 Daniel interprets a dream for Nebuchadnezzar
  \item 5:1-31 Daniel interprets the handwriting on the wall for Belshazzar
  \item 6:1-28 Daniel in the lions’ den
  \item 7:1-28 A vision about four world kingdoms replaced by a fifth
\end{itemize}

Such a chiastic link would require many similar features within the two narratives in order for the chiasm to work. The two chapters share four characteristics.\textsuperscript{41} The first is one shared by the majority of the text up until chapter 7; it is written in Aramaic. The second common feature is that both chapters make use of the four-kingdom motif. The third shared element, which also appears in chapter 4, is the use of dreams. Apart from the possible redaction of 1:17, the verb or noun for “dream” does not appear anywhere else in Daniel. The fourth element also links the chapter to Daniel 4 by locating the dream within the reign of Belshazzar, which is a break with the narrative sequence of the book thus far.

The proposed chiastic structure does seem to contain the mirroring usually found

\textsuperscript{38} John J. Collins, \textit{Daniel, with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature} (The Forms of the Old Testament Literature XX; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 30; Redditt, \textit{Daniel}.


\textsuperscript{40} Taken from Redditt, \textit{Daniel}, 114. One should note that this does not form the standard Chi X pattern that defines a chiasmus. However, it has become commonplace to refer to these longer mirroring patterns as chiastic structures and since Redditt uses the term, I retain his usage.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
within intentional chiasms and there are many links between chapter 2 and chapter 7. However, the focal point of a chiasm is usually the middle point (in this case Daniel’s interpretations) and not the final piece (chapter 7). This does not fit with the majority understanding that Daniel 7 is the most important chapter in the entire book. Collins’ subsequent placement theory could answer both these issues. In its present place within Daniel, it works to form the mirrored structure examined above, but it maintains the importance that it enjoyed as an independent text. Thus, for the purposes of this study it is appropriate to study this chapter in light of chapter 2.

While the language remains the same (Aramaic) in chapter 7, many things change: Daniel becomes the narrator rather than the subject of narration, and the focus shifts from the earthly royal court to the heavenly council. Yet, the allegorical nature of the revelation remains the same and runs throughout the passage. This symbolism begins with the sea from which the beasts emerge. The association between the sea and chaos has a long history within Israelite religion and throughout the ancient Near East. Collins connects the scene here to the texts that involve Rahab and Leviathan (e.g., Job 26:12-13; Pss 89:9-11; 74:13-17). Of this symbolism Collins says, “It evokes a sense that the monsters which had been subdued at creation were again let loose on the world.” The animal allegory, which could have been taken from the list in Hosea 13, adds to the


43 Collins, Daniel (1984), 73-75. This water imagery is used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to expand on historical/political events (cf. Isa 17:12-14; 30:7; 51:9-10; Psa 87:4), so the use of it here to refer to temporal kingdoms should not be viewed as problematic.

44 Ibid., 74.
presentation in Daniel 2. In chapter 2 these kingdoms have been allotted time, but here they are viewed as agents of chaos: “anarchy and rebellion.”\(^\text{45}\) The winds of Heaven (cf. Zech 2:6; 6:5) add to the idea that this is meant to evoke the chaos myth, as Smith-Christopher sees these as a heavenly battle between these two forces.\(^\text{46}\) Redditt turns to the interpretation for a better understanding of this part of the passage and he says, “As in Daniel 2, ‘kings’ here stand for the kingdoms they rule. They would rise from the earth, not the sea, as in the vision. The sea represented their opposition to God; earth was where they would rule.”\(^\text{47}\) This pattern of king for nation may provide insight into the One like a Son of Man.

The animals themselves contain code. The first beast is a hybrid lion-eagle, an animal that represents supremacy on land and in the air, and represents the Babylonian Empire, which is appropriate imagery for the nation that conquered Judah.\(^\text{48}\) Hartman and Di Lella claim that the description of the first and second animals have been transposed, since the description better fits the nature of the other animal and because of the numbers involved.\(^\text{49}\) The second beast, the bear, represents the empire of the Medes,

\(^\text{45}\) Ibid., 75.


\(^\text{47}\) Redditt, Daniel, 130.

\(^\text{48}\) Hartman and Di Lella, The Book of Daniel, 212.

\(^\text{49}\) The first animal represents the Babylonian Empire and thus the three fangs/ribs/tusks would represent the three known kings of this empire, Nebuchadnezzar, Evilmerodach, and Belshazzar. It would also leave the second animal with one, Darius the Mede, and the third kingdom, the Persian, would have four kings (Cyrus, Ahasueras, Artaxerxes, and Darius I) according to this kind of numerology. Additional support for this theory can be found in Rev 13:1-2 which describes the beast as having feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion, which could suggest that the MT version of Dan 7:4 is an emendation of the original (likely by accidental transposition). For more information see, Ibid., 209-12. It should be noted that there is no textual evidence for this emendation and no reason to assume that Daniel is aware of any Babylonian kings other than the two he mentions by name (Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar). Thus Redditt, Daniel,
and this imagery suits the relationship between Israel and the Median Empire, as the bear was considered hostile only when confronted (cf. 2 Sam 17:8; Hos 13:8; Prov 17:12). The leopard represents the Persian Empire, whose animal is fierce, but not to the same extent as the lion, which again mirrors the relationship among these political players.

The fourth beast is the Greek empire. No known animal resembles this beast, which could be the author’s way of setting apart the European Greek empire from the Asiatic nations. The ten horns on the beast represent the ten kings who reigned between Alexander and Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Since horns were a common symbol of royal power in the ancient Near East, this symbolism makes sense. Yet, this understanding is not universally accepted because there is no known historical event that would relate to Antiochus’ removal of the three preceding Seleucid kings; therefore, some suggest that the ten horns are actually meant to symbolize the rulers of other gentile nations, or even non-symbolically. The notation that the little horn waged war on the holy ones is likely a reference to Antiochus’ persecutions of the Jews, the details of which are included in v. 120, 22-23.

51 Ibid., 213.
52 This understanding is almost universal in modern scholarship, but that was not always the case. Historically, it was thought that the four empires were Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman. Since the only place Rome appears in the book is 11:30, this seems less likely and hence has given way to the newer interpretation: Redditt, Daniel, 119. For a very detailed exploration of the various proposed theories see, John E. Goldingay, Daniel (Word Biblical Commentary 30; Dallas: Word, 1989), 174-76.
53 Gowan, Daniel, 107, 10.
54 Towner, Daniel, 95.
55 Gowan, Daniel, 106.
56 Goldingay, Daniel, 164, 79.
25. This persecution is set to end with the direct judgment of the Ancient of Days.

The legal setting is clear not only from the appearance of the Lord and his retinue on thrones, and from the judgment that is pronounced, but also from the mention of the books. These books are likely the record book and the book of life found in other parts of the Hebrew Bible (Mal 3:16; Neh 5:19; 13:14; Isa 65:6; Pss 51:3; 69:29; 109:14; Exod 32:32; Dan 12:1; Ezek 2:9; 3:1). These books record the names of all those living on Earth and detail their good and bad deeds.

Ideas from Ugarit’s mythology abound within this chapter. The Ancient of Days is similar to the epithet “Father of Years” often used for El, the chief god of Ugarit. The relationship between Yahweh and El has long been determined and thus this alternative designation for El is appropriately used in the coded system of apocalyptic literature to refer to Yahweh. While this phrase is not used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to refer to Yahweh, similar terms are, and thus the association of these two characters is most logical. The use of “white” and “wool” in the description of the Ancient of Days is used to communicate purity (cf. Isa 1:18; Psa 51:9). The scene reflects the description in Psa 97:1-5 and the fire imagery that occurs in Mal 3:2; Exod 3:2; Ezek 1:27; 1 Enoch 14:15-23 is within a divine context. In addition, the One like a Son of Man comes on the clouds of Heaven. In Ugaritic mythology, Baal is known as “the rider of the clouds” (e.g., CAT 1.2 IV 8, 29; 1.3 II 40; 1.3 III 38; 1.3 IV 4, 6; 1.4 III 11, 18; 1.4 V 60; 1.5 II 7). This indicates that despite this character’s appearance, he is a divine being of

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57 CAT 1.1, III, 24; 1.2, III, 5; 1.3, V, 8; 1.4, IV, 24; 1.5, IV, 2; 1.6, I, 36; 1.17, VI, 49.

58 See Pss 90:2; 93:2 (“from everlasting”); Isa 41:4; 44:6 (“first and last”); Psa 102:26-28 (“years have no end”); Job 36:26 (“the number of his year is past searching out”). For more on the association between the Ancient of Days and Yahweh see Sharon Pace, Daniel (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary 17; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 239.
important rank. Also, the phrase “the rider of the clouds” can be connected to Yahweh, since elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible he is associated with flying through the air, sometimes in connection with clouds, and thus it creates a very close link between these characters.

The appearance of an interpretive being is common in apocalyptic literature and occurs elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (Zech 1:9, 19; 2:3; 4:1; 5:5; 6:4); however, it is unusual here in Daniel because prior to this Daniel has been able to interpret the dreams, visions, and the writing on the wall by himself. This discrepancy is only highlighted by Daniel’s need to request interpretation not once but twice in the narrative. Pace sees his need for interpretation as a means of highlighting the importance of this vision; the famous interpreter now requires an interpretation from Heaven itself and his request is not rebuffed.

Since the Ancient of Days should be understood as Yahweh, in the following Chapter the two will be explored as one. Several new characters are also introduced in this passage: the beasts, the Thousands upon Thousands, Daniel, the interpreting persona and the One like a Son of Man. The beasts are the subject of the council and one could argue that they are involved; however, their judgment and sentence indicate that they are not accepted and therefore, should not be understood as members.


60 Examples include Deut 33:26; Pss 18:9-15; 68:33; 104:3; Isa 19:1; Jer 4:13ff; Nah 1:2ff.

61 Redditt, Daniel, 129.

62 Pace, Daniel, 246.

63 Joshua and Isaiah were also originally in the role of defendant and had the council not commissioned them they would have remained in that role and not be considered members. The role of the
The Thousands upon Thousands are perhaps the most difficult to decipher. That these are members of the Council of Yahweh is usually taken for granted and often treated as a parallel phrase to the נביאים, but this will be examined further in the following Chapter. This difficulty also extends to “the holy ones of the Most High” (vv. 18 and 22). Most often this is understood as the people of Israel, but Noth introduced the idea that these beings are “angels,” and his theory has been adopted and developed by Collins. The parallels between this passage and the Animal Apocalypse of the book of 1 Enoch 85-90 that Collins demonstrates strengthens this theory. However, one cannot assume that just because they are mentioned in a council passage that these beings are members.

Daniel’s membership is also unclear. Like Micaiah ben Imlah he is able to witness the scene, but he does not participate. Yet, unlike Micaiah, he is able to interact with a being of the council, and thus his role will be discussed further in Chapter Four. Related to this is the question of the interpreting persona, often viewed as the angelus interpretus. Since there is doubt that this being is a member of the council, the identity, role, and function of this character will need to be examined in greater detail. In addition, the One like a Son of Man needs to be considered further since he is present, titled, and commissioned in the vision and thus will be explored in depth in the next Chapter.

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64 This theory was first proposed by Otto Procksh: Otto Procksh, "Der Menschensohn als Gottessohn," Christentum und Wissenschaft 3 (1927), 429; John J. Collins, Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 54-55.

65 Collins, Daniel (1993), 54-55, 296, 323.
CHAPTER FOUR: COUNCIL MEMBERS AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Introduction

This study began with a discussion about the Council of Yahweh and the various criteria that can be used to determine whether a passage is a council text. In order to determine membership within the Council of Yahweh, one must develop additional criteria for determining who are and who are not included. This is not as easy as it sounds. However, the definition of a divine council should be helpful in providing insight into potential criteria. Yet, even before putting criteria forward one needs to explore what a member is. Standard convention has seen that membership exists at various levels and not all levels are equally relevant or important, but all levels play a role in the council.¹ In addition, there are often characters who perform a role on behalf of the council, but that role alone is not enough justification to consider them regular members. This chapter will explore all characters that may qualify for membership or even a supporting role, while the following chapter will explore the structure that can be developed based on the information gathered here.

The criteria for determining membership will be defined in three ways. The first is that the character is named (not necessarily by personal name, but at least by title). This is important because without this identifier the reader would not know which

¹ I will say more about this in the following chapter, which explores structure in detail. Examples of studies that demonstrate this are: Lowell K. Handy, Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), passim; Michael S. Heiser, “The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature” (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004), passim; Mark S. Smith, The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel’s Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 41-66.
character is taking which action, and thus it provides no further insight into membership or structure. For example, there are some unnamed council members who appear in 1 Kings 22, e.g., the reader is told “one said one thing, and another said another” (1 Kings 22:20b), but at no point does the reader learn the identity of these characters. This verse confirms the discussion criterion regarding the fate of the individual or group, but provides no insight beyond that.

The second criterion is that the character is a witness. This criterion seems obvious, but it is also problematic. One can certainly assume that if a being is a member of the council that being needs to be present for some council meetings. However, the being does not need to be physically present, but it must be able to witness the council through a vision or dream sequence. This is true even when the being is merely an agent of the council, but there might be times when a being could be an instrument of the council without having been privy to the council (or even know s/he is being used in that way). For example, the 400 prophets in 1 Kings 22 are used as an instrument of the council but are not present for the council and according to this criterion will not be considered members despite playing a role on behalf of the council. Agents who actually witness the council and are aware of their role on behalf of the council are more difficult. Since these characters are important to the function of the council they will be considered in this chapter, but the relationship between agents and members will be explored further in the following chapter.2 For this study, knowledge of the council, which would be gained from witnessing it, is required for membership consideration.

The final criterion is that the character is involved in the council’s purpose. Some

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2 See Chapter Five, pages 139-42.
activities are more important than others, and some relate to the primary purpose of the
council more than others. However, these distinctions will be made in the following
chapter on structure rather than within this chapter. For the purposes of this chapter,
having some active role within the council drama will be enough for a character to be
considered further.

Because there are multiple levels of membership and the narratives only provide
small fragments of the council meeting, all three features do not need to be present in
order for a character to be a member, but the more criteria present the greater the case is
for that being’s membership. The reverse is also true: there are cases where a character is
named, a witness, and involved (e.g., the beasts in Daniel 7) but, based on a narrative
analysis, is not considered to be a member. Thus, the criteria serve as guidelines that
need to be evaluated alongside each individual literary context. I exegeted the various
Council of Yahweh passages that actually contain individual members in the previous
chapter, and at the end of each exegesis I gave a list of potential members. This chapter
explores this list and examines each character (or group of characters) in greater detail.
This will provide the basis for the following chapter, which will propose a structure for
understanding the council and provide further insight into the boundaries of membership.

**Yahweh/The Ancient of Days**

Since part of the purpose of this study is to question the assumptions that underlie
the study of the council, one must explore the question of Yahweh’s membership and
leadership. Previously, I questioned whether all references to the divine council in the
biblical texts should be considered the Council of Yahweh, especially since divine
councils can be found in many ancient Near Eastern cultures. Therefore, it is not enough to assume that just because Yahweh is the chief god of Israel that he is a leader or even a member of every divine council (though it is likely, considering the ancient Near Eastern pattern). Ultimately, it is more important whether or not the passage in question relates to the Council of Yahweh or whether the passage refers to another council, such as that of El (e.g., Deut 32:8 at Qumran or in the LXX). The first criterion, being named, is met because the divine name Yahweh appears in each of the council passages, except for Daniel 7 where the Ancient of Days presides. This removes any ambiguity over what deity is involved. In addition, the second criterion is met because Yahweh not only witnesses the events but is physically present in each of the passages. Finally, the involvement criterion is met by Yahweh setting the “agenda” in each passage: 1 Kings 22; Isaiah 6; Job 1-2; Zechariah 3; and Daniel 7. For example, Yahweh addresses הַשֶּׁטֶן in Job, while in Isaiah and 1 Kings Yahweh asks for a volunteer. This makes it clear that Yahweh is a member of the council, since he is named, a witness, and involved. It is also clear that in those texts Yahweh is the chief deity and the council answers to him. In all these passages it is Yahweh who approves the plan.

In Daniel 7, the Ancient of Days presides over the council. Yet, this title need not preclude Yahweh’s leadership, but simply identifies the deity through ancient mythological terminology consistent with the apocalyptic genre of Daniel. Despite the fact that this title fits more easily with descriptions of El, one should not assume that the

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3 See Chapter Two, esp pages 26-33.
4 The divine name appears in 1 Kings 22, Isaiah 6, Job 1-2, and Zechariah 3. Daniel 7 is the only Council of Yahweh text that does not include the divine name, as all other contenders, such as Psalm 82 and Deuteronomy 32 were excluded in Chapter Two. The identity of the Ancient of Days as Yahweh will be discussed in detail below.
text refers to the Canaanite deity rather than Yahweh. By the time Daniel was written, El’s characteristics had been amalgamated into Yahweh, and while these two may represent separate characters in texts like Genesis (as argued in Chapter Two), by this point in history the two are indistinguishable, and terminology previously limited to El is now extended to Yahweh. Thus the chief god of the council in Daniel 7 is Yahweh.

The first criterion, being named, is met with the term השטן. An important feature concerning השטן’s character is the presence of the definite article on the noun. This indicates that it is not a proper name, as this would be intrinsically definite, nor is it a common noun. Therefore, השטן in the Hebrew Bible is not the name of a person or a being, but its title, or vocation. This character is named according to its function within the council, which is consistent with the general naming practices in Israel and throughout the ancient Near East. The presence of the definite article is also found with רוח, and מלאך, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Much of the historical discussion surrounding השטן revolves around his presence in Heaven, which fulfills the second criterion, that is being a witness. In deciding how to interpret השטן one has to answer one of the interpretive questions set forward at the beginning of this study: namely, are there characters present in council

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5 While this might be understood in the category of unique referent as presented by Waltke and O’Connor, the emphasis on the rarity with which the terms of this category are placed together with the definite article would be evidence against such an attribution because the term השטן always appears with the article in Divine Council contexts: B. K. Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), §13.4b.

6 It was not uncommon for naming to have more to do with function than any other factor in the ancient Near East. Names were considered to have an effect on the person and his/her behavior: Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 43.
texts who are not members of the council? Perhaps due to the later theological
developments concerning the character of הָטָטָן, this question is posed about הָטָטָן more
than any other possible member of the council. After a survey of the available literature,
Hartley concludes that the “majority of scholars” would consider הָטָטָן a member of the
council, but some recent scholars understand the text to portray the Satan as an intruder.
They come to this position either by taking the term also to mean ‘other than’ or by
understanding the preposition among to indicate someone who is an outsider.” While
this might solve the original problem is does create others. One such problem is “How
would an intruder access Yahweh’s Council?” By not including Zedekiah ben
Chenaanah and the 400 prophets within the council, 1 Kings 22 demonstrates that
Yahweh is able to keep beings out of the council should he choose. The inability to keep
out intruders would limit Yahweh’s power. As I said elsewhere, “If God cannot keep
הָטָטָן out of his throne room, then how could he hope to control the actions of הָטָטָן on
Earth or in relation to Job?” This conclusion is unlikely given that at every stage of the
narrative Yahweh is shown to be in complete control of הָטָטָן. Schreiber says, “Without
a doubt, satan is presented as a heavenly being, a member of the heavenly council, but as
such subject to God’s power and acting only on God’s instructions. No dualism with a

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7 Cf. the rest of this paragraph to Ellen White, “The Purpose and Portrayal of the śātān in the Old Testament” (Th.M. Thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2004), 43-44.


9 White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 44.

10 This control is seen in Job in the restrictions that God places on הָטָטָן. This limits his ability to act on his own accord in regards to Job. The limiting power of the Lord over הָטָטָן is also clearly seen in Zech 3:2, where God silences the objection of הָטָטָן with absolutely no resistance.
highest god and a highest evil force can be constructed as a basic scheme of this narrative." Most of the arguments against understanding הַשֵּטַן as a member of the council stem from the first pericope, because the statement that introduces הַשֵּטַן follows his raison d’être; however, the second pericope is explicit that הַשֵּטַן is there to “take his position among them” (2:1), and this suggests that he is a member who holds a regular position in the council. The similar statement in the second pericope must also be considered, and based on the wording there, little doubt can be left as to whether or not הַשֵּטַן is included among האלהים.

The third criterion, involvement, is met by הַשֵּטַן in Job, but the nature of this involvement requires further discussion. Job’s prologue contains the most references to הַשֵּטַן in the Old Testament. It is usually on the basis of his behaviour in Job that some believe either to be already evil or to be turning evil. Yet, he is a member of האלהים and a servant of Yahweh. In the two pericopes in Job’s prologue that mention הַשֵּטַן, the issue of initiative is vital. Since Yahweh initiates conversation and action, it is difficult to support a claim of satanic independence. Initiative is also important to the idea of responsibility in the text. Is Yahweh or הַשֵּטַן responsible for the testing of Job?

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The role of hồֶשֶן is not to harm or inflict pain on humanity, though that might be a side effect of his job performance. His job is to seek out people whose piety may not be what it should be. It is a role similar to those undertaken by the spies of Persia. Their reports of disloyalty may lead to negative consequences for the one being reported, but those consequences are the result of the disloyal act not the vocational veracity of the reporter. hồֶשֶן is actually the keeper of measure-for-measure justice. He is always under the control of Yahweh and he does not act against Yahweh’s will nor disobey him. hồֶשֶן’s speech towards Yahweh could be viewed as disrespectful, but answering questions with questions is a typical Semitic dialogue structure. Also, the proverb, “skin for skin” should not be viewed as a disrespectful command, but rather an application of sage thought. Thus, I conclude, “Therefore, he is merely a servant of Yahweh in a scene initiated by Yahweh and in which Yahweh is in total control from start to finish.”

In the Book of Job, Yahweh is always in control of hồֶשֶן. Jung says, “God desires man (sic) to be perfect and Satan accuses and tests man (sic) in order that his sincerity

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15 Hartley, Book of Job, 169.


may be proved or his fickleness punished.”

18 חָטָן is not the antithesis to Yahweh, not the evil opposite, but rather a dedicated employee.19 While it is not possible to understand חָטָן as Yahweh’s adversary, the nature of his job can make it appear that he is humanity’s adversary. Since his vocation requires that he test human piety, naturally human beings dislike these tests and project their dislike onto this character ultimately seeing him as their evil nemesis.20 This assessment is unfair as there is nothing intrinsically malicious in חָטָן. However, his tests are distasteful and potentially disastrous, the tester rather than the testee is blamed. Humans have shifted the blame for their own limitations and failures onto חָטָן rather than face the responsibility themselves. This blame is a misunderstanding of חָטָן’s original good intention, which is to demonstrate humanity’s faithfulness to Yahweh.

There are many parallels between the text of Job and the presentation of חָטָן in Zechariah 3. These three uncontested passages (Job 1, 2 and Zechariah 3) referring to a celestial being called חָטָן present an almost identical portrayal. This could be due to the similar date of composition. With the ordinary use of the noun חָטָן, there is often a legal or governmental context.21 Zechariah 3 highlights the legal elements and portrays חָטָן as


the prosecuting attorney, as can be seen by his physical location. This supports the idea that דְּשֶׁן is not meant to describe an individual, but a vocation.

As in the Book of Job, in Zechariah דְּשֶׁן follows Yahweh’s instruction, the command to be silent, with no indication that he is tempted to disobey. This instantaneous obedience and lack of further appeal demonstrates his subordinate position in relationship to Yahweh. This is particularly significant considering that דְּשֶׁן’s claim is legitimate. This is unequivocally true as all theories, ritual impurity or the personification of religious, cultic, or cultural concerns, lead to legitimate objections.

As I argued elsewhere, the objection that דְּשֶׁן does not get to voice should be interpreted as a means of presenting the concerns of the society relating to the reintegration of the returnees, and the reinstitution of the temple and priesthood. This depiction of דְּשֶׁן in Zechariah 3 parallels his presentation in Job 1-2.

This leads to the question of the function of דְּשֶׁן in the Old Testament. While the behavior of דְּשֶׁן would not always be categorized as “good,” one cannot define his

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23 This paragraph re-presents material found in White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 85.


25 See the discussion of Zechariah 3 in Chapter Three, page 81.

motivation as “bad.” This strange dichotomy is the result of the character’s dual-function.\footnote{I explore this dual-function hypothesis in White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 22-25.} The way in which the character is depicted and the reason the character is depicted may seem contradictory, but because the first is operating within the world of the text and the other is coming from the world behind the text, it is not truly conflicting.

Like Yahweh’s patrolling angels (Zech 1:10-11) or roving eye (Zech 4:10), the first function of הֶשְׁתָּן is to perform textually a role similar to that of the Persian spies.\footnote{This paragraph has been adapted from White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 23.} His portrayal as “the skeptic” within the text is reflected in his vocation (roving the Earth testing human piety). This is clear from reading the prologue of Job and his objection in Zechariah 3. As I have said elsewhere, “He is not the judge or the jury; he is not even the tempter. His role is to bring forward to Yahweh what could be infractions of divine law.”\footnote{White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 23.} His objections are always valid, but they are not upheld for reasons outside of the law.\footnote{Meyers and Meyers, Haggai, Zechariah 1-8, 186.} When a prosecuting attorney does not win a court case, the jury does not pronounce her evil or guilty, but recognizes that the attorney played a vital role. This parallel is also true for הֶשְׁתָּן.\footnote{As has already been shown there are parallels between הֶשְׁתָּן and this courtroom official: see pages 78-80. This is true of both the title and the common noun.} In fact, he takes on God’s role in order for the Deity to be allowed to behave in a way that is ungod-like.\footnote{While this first function of הֶשְׁתָּן operates within the world of the text, הֶשְׁתָּן also has a function for the world behind the text. This second function uses הֶשְׁתָּן’s role as divine skeptic as a means of expressing concern over the governance of the pious. Zechariah 3}
is a good example of this. This is accurate regardless of whether Joshua should be interpreted as a symbol for all Israelites. In fact, this would provide a stronger parallel to Job. Ultimately, הנשטן presents a question about theodicy. He functions in the text in a way that questions the way the people are viewing God’s justice as they are experiencing it. In each biblical case, the questions that arise through הנשטן are not valid.

There are six components common to the portrayal of הנשטן in the Old Testament passages:

1. He appears within the Council
2. The narrative has a governmental/legal context
3. He makes an accusation based on justice
4. He is under God’s authority
5. He is not independent
6. He is ultimately demonstrated to be incorrect

The first two elements, the council and a legal/governmental setting, are related to each other in that the narrative appears in the legal proceedings of the council. This is very clear in the book of Job as both pericopes begin with the sons of God, the council, being assembled on the “one day” that they meet. Zechariah 3 is also set as a court case that is being held in the midst of the council. This is an important element because one

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32 It is also prominent in Job 1-2, where the implicit question is whether it is right for the righteous to be blessed and whether this blessing is the motivating factor in the practice of piety.

33 Stuhlmueller, Rebuilding with Hope, 78. The idea that Joshua is meant to represent all of Israel is related to the parallel with Amos 4:11 where the text refers to all Israel as the “brand plucked from the fire.” For the reasons behind understanding Joshua as the representative for all Israel, see Appendixes D and E.

34 While the analysis leading up to this point has been highly influenced by my Th.M thesis, the following material on הנשטן goes beyond that original analysis and pulls together my conclusions in a more concrete way. In addition, my consideration of the genre of the texts is entirely new to my current understanding of this character.

could claim that without a council setting the character cannot be used.

The third aspect common to the texts that include הֶשְׁטֶן is that he makes an accusation based on genre-specific justice. Because of the texts’ legal context, this likens his role to that of a district attorney. This is especially true in that the character must assume the absolute guilt of the one it is prosecuting as a function of its position; there is no room for innocence. It is also important to note that the accusation is made against a human being, not the Deity. Therefore, any critique of the Divine is made purely by association with humanity. For example, in Job the piety of the main character is questioned (e.g., he might be worshipping Yahweh for his own personal gain, rather than sincere faith). However, a consequence of the accusation could be that God’s system of justice is also questioned because it allows for such an accusation to be made against the human.

It is also important that the type of justice he represents is appropriate for the genre of both texts. In the Job passage, הֶשְׁטֶן represents the retribution principle, and this type of measure for measure justice is at home in the context of wisdom literature. In Zechariah, however, הֶשְׁטֶן’s concerns revolve around purity and social distinction, which are appropriate legal categories for the post-exilic prophet. This difference indicates that the connection to justice is not something dictated by the scene or by the genre but something that is inherent within the character. In other words, הֶשְׁטֶן always represents

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36 Dianne Bergant, *Israel’s Wisdom Literature: A Liberation-Critical Reading* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 17. These are not the only forms of biblical literature that employ this understanding of justice as measure for measure was the most common concept of justice in the ancient Near East, see also Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc.

37 This is because the book of Zechariah fits within a cultic/priestly response to the exile and that distinguishes it from the earlier pre-exilic prophetic concerns.
some form of justice, which is dependent upon the genre in which the character appears.

The fourth and fifth elements, being under Yahweh’s authority and having no independence, are very important. הָשָּׁטָן is always shown to be under God’s complete authority. Therefore, he has no independence apart from what Yahweh grants him. While these concepts are related, they are not precisely the same thing. One can be under someone’s authority and yet operate freely. This is not the case with הָשָּׁטָן. In Job, all action is initiated by Yahweh, including conversation; even the action that he authorized הָשָּׁטָן to do is restricted. In Zechariah, God immediately curtails the only action that הָשָּׁטָן takes that could be conceived of as independent, even before the words can leave his lips. This is not a figure who can operate outside the Deity’s will.

The final element is also important; הָשָּׁטָן is always incorrect in his accusation. In Job, this is demonstrated when the main character proves to be truly pious and does not curse God. In Zechariah, this is demonstrated by God silencing הָשָּׁטָן before he can even make his accusation. Therefore, in each narrative הָשָּׁטָן is proved wrong before the case concludes. Ultimately, this revelation reverses the reader’s expectations as הָשָּׁטָן takes on the expected role of God or represents the expected justice of God in order that God can step outside these expectations and provide new insight into the world, especially cultic, order.

In the Hebrew Bible, הָשָּׁטָן operates under Yahweh’s authority and is a member of Yahweh’s council. However, there does appear to be something not quite right about הָשָּׁטָן; after all, he is proven wrong in Job and rebuked in Zechariah. Therefore, if הָשָּׁטָן is not the epitome of evil, this dysfunction must be explained in another way. Perhaps the best way to view הָשָּׁטָן is as blind justice; הָשָּׁטָן has no capacity to extend mercy or adjust
justice to account for circumstance. It is not that גשמט is evil; it is that גשמט represents
the consequences for a world without God’s mercy or power.

In Job, גשמט questions the validity of the retributive justice principle and thus sets
the scene for Yahweh to step outside the principle. In this narrative, Yahweh is not using
גשמט in order to demonstrate his mercy but to prove that he is not bound by any form of
justice, even if he established such justice. By having גשמט voice the expected judicial
practice, the deity is able to demonstrate that he stands outside judicial expectations. In
fact, if the prose and poetry portions are taken together, one can even see Yahweh as
claiming that he is not bound by justice or expectation, and his supreme power allows
him to step outside the system at will. This has led to the accusation that Yahweh is
malicious. In contrast, Zechariah 3 has Yahweh stepping outside the judicial
expectations in order to demonstrate mercy to humanity. Rather than delivering the
justifiable punishment to Joshua, he declares him innocent despite his guilt. Therefore, in
Zechariah, גשמט highlights the gift of God’s חסד by demonstrating what life would be like
without it.

גשמט operates only in absolute terms, good or evil, guilty or innocent, right or
wrong; he does not make allowances for circumstances or for mercy. It is not his job to
determine whether the person has technically violated the law, but should be found “not
guilty.” He is not the jury, nor the judge, but the Prosecutor. He is only designed to
accuse.

His accusations against humanity ultimately amount to a critique of Yahweh’s

38 Jung, Fallen Angels, 26.

justice. Thus when is shown to be incorrect it is not really a condemnation of , but a “not guilty” verdict on Yahweh. This gets played out in the narrative of Job. Since is not stopped from making his accusations as in Zechariah 3, the reader is allowed to witness the trial which results in the acquittal of Yahweh’s system of justice. Job demonstrates that despite ’s concerns that Yahweh is bribing faith, an unjust act, Yahweh in fact has a justice system that demands a faithful response for no reason other than a person’s integrity. Thus, is present in the text in order to demonstrate the greatness of Yahweh’s justice and by extension his mercy rather than to condemn God’s system of justice.

Being named in the text, the first criterion, is met easily by , who in 1 Kings 22 takes on the personification of a liar, carries on its name the definite article, like . This suggests that like , is also a title of a position within the council. Walsh disagrees with this assessment and says, “The definite article indicates that this is the only ‘spirit’ in Yahweh’s court.” While this is a particularly interesting and even attractive position, it is not generally held. Also, if one adopted Walsh’s theory then it would have to be applied to as well. Should this minority theory prove to be true it would have interesting consequences for understanding the parallels between these deities and named deities in other ancient Near East pantheons. If these beings are actual solitary figures rather than a random representative of a group, then their origins could

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41 J. T. Walsh, 1 Kings (Berit Olam; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 351.
easily have been one of the named gods (e.g., Anat, Ba’al, Asherah, etc.) of the Canaanite
council whose names have been relegated to a function. Either way, a solitary figure
behind these terms presents a better parallel to council practice in the ancient Near East.42
The second criterion, witnessing the council, is also met by רוח as he is present for the
discussion regarding the King of Israel’s fate.

רוח also clearly meets the involvement criterion. רוח has more autonomy than
because whereas הדשן had to rely on Yahweh’s initiative in order to speak and
interact, רוח is able to volunteer for a project that he himself proposes to Yahweh. Yet,
once again, before the plan can be put into action Yahweh must give his consent (v. 22).
In what appears to be an attempt to protect monotheism, Jones views רוח “as a reference
to the divinely inspired spirit of prophecy, which, because it was an extension of the
divine personality, was personified.”43 Because spirit is often considered an attribute of a
person, it lends itself to this kind of hypostasis. However, the literary context of this
passage does not fit this understanding. It is clear that multiple characters are present as
they discuss several proposals and the text does not lend itself to being understood as
various aspects of Yahweh in dialogue.

42 Again it is important to note that one should not give priority to ancient Near Eastern parallels.
It is equally possible that in an attempt to distinguish themselves and their religious system that they
intentionally developed a council that does not reflect the common practices of the area.

43 G. H. Jones, 1 and 2 Kings (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984),
368. Jones follows this by claiming a parallel between רוח here and השרפים in Isa 6:6, but the only
similarity these two character share is that they both approach (a) prophet(s). The closest parallel between
רוח and Isaiah 6 is to the prophet himself, who both steps forward and volunteers to act on behalf of the
council by bringing a message to those on Earth. His suggested parallel would also undercut his position
that רוח is a personification since השרפים are certainly not. Jones is following Gray who says, “The spirit
is the supernatural, divinely inspired power of prophecy, which in the case of Zedekiah and his colleagues
lured Ahab to destruction. This was an emanation, or extension, of the divine personality, and so may be
personified”; John Gray, 1 & 2 Kings: A Commentary (The Old Testament Library; Philadelphia:
Westminster, 1963), 403.
This is not the only time Yahweh has used this kind of Spirit to accomplish his purposes. In 1 Sam 16:14 he sends an Evil Spirit to torment Saul.\textsuperscript{44} Walton and Mathews draw a parallel between David and Absalom in 2 Sam 15:32-37 and 16:15-17:14 when David sent Hushai to become one of Absalom’s advisers.\textsuperscript{45} In fact, Hamori identifies eight passages in the Hebrew Bible where a רוח is clearly a divine being acting on the behest of Yahweh.\textsuperscript{46} Hamori says:

In each text a divinely sent רוח causes a person or group to hear falsehood, sometimes accompanied by terror. The purpose is judgment related, as the one afflicted with falsehood is shown to have been in the wrong already. The result is often death to a king (usually violent) or removal of political opponents, ensuring Israel’s security and preserving God’s plan for the elect. A survey of this group of texts will demonstrate the existence of a widespread biblical tradition for a רוח as divine agent, specifically associated with bringing destructive justice by means of falsehood.\textsuperscript{47}

It is clear that the portrayal of רוח in 1 Kings 22, a council scene, is consistent with רוח in other texts, but not necessarily the same being. So at least in this case one can conclude that the function of bringing justice is the same for the divine רוח in both council and non-council texts, and therefore, non-council texts might be cautiously used to understand this role better in a later study. It is also not the first time that Yahweh has deceived a prophet in order to accomplish his goals (Ezek 14:9; Jer 20:7).

\textsuperscript{44} For more on this parallel see Jones, \textit{1 and 2 Kings}, 368.


\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 169.
Not only are the שְׂרָפִים named, which meet the first criterion, they are the most extensively described council characters. Hartenstein says, “the fact that they are described in much more detail than YHWH himself is remarkable.” There are seven occurrences of the word שְׂרָפִים/שְׂרָף found in five different texts. However, only in Isaiah 6 are they associated with the Council of Yahweh. The traditional interpretation of שְׂרָפִים is as serpents who have human attributes. Yet, more recent scholars believe there is a stronger connection to fire. The name most likely is traced to the verb שְׂרָף, which means “to burn/to destroy.” The connection between fire and holiness is also appropriate in this context, as these beings serve to announce the holiness of the deity: “fire is everywhere associated with God’s holiness (Exod. 3:1-6; 13:21; 19:18; Lev. 10:1-2; Num. 11:1-2; 1 K. 18:24; Isa. 6:6-7) so that it would be entirely appropriate for those who declare that holiness (v. 3) to be ‘fiery’ in their appearance.” The connection to fire is plausible, since they are connected with coals in Isaiah 6; this may seem insignificant, but considering the parallels with Zechariah 3 the method of purification


50 For a full discussion of the various hypothesis regarding the שְׂרָפִים see Ibid., 742-43.

51 Hartenstein, "Cheribim and Seraphim," 164.

52 That שְׂרָפִים cover parts of their anatomy in the presence of Yahweh has led to the suggestion that this is done in order to respect God’s holiness: J. Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39 (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 179.
might be connected with the nature of the one purifying, and the etymology of the
name. Potential parallels are Šarrabu or Šarrapu, epithets of Nergal, the Akkadian god
of pestilence. Wildberger, however, says, “the Hebrew שבר, 'heat of the sun,' Isa. 35:7;
49:10 (KAT3 415)” is a better parallel. Gesenius suggests the Arabic šarif, ‘noble,’ as a
way to understand this divine councilor.

It is not necessary to insist on one over the other. לשרפיםה could have a connection
to fire and still share serpentine characteristics. Hartenstein attempts to make sense of the
references to fiery serpents in Num 21:6, 8; Deut 8:15; Isa 14:29, by suggesting this is
another phrase used to refer to לשרפיםה (versus the typical translation of “poisonous”).
Furthermore, Keel relates this to the flying serpents in Isa 30:6 as representing a
combination of the three fiery serpent texts with Isaiah 6. Wildberger follows this
hypothesis, saying, “It is more likely correct to connect it with the Egyptian śfr, ‘fabulous
winged creature,’ as portrayed in a grave at Beni Hasan (AOB 392) (cf. the Demotic

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53 In Zechariah 3 the defendant also requires purification as he appears before Yahweh in filthy
clothes, but here the messenger removes the robes and dresses him in clean ones, along with adding a tunic.
Therefore, one can assume that purification is something the council does when a guilty party is present but
that the method of purification varies depending on what requires purification and which being is doing the
purification. Keil and Delitzsch also connect this to the act of purification in verse 6: C. F. Keil and F.
Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 7: Isaiah (trans. James Martin; 1873; reprinted Grand


Robinson; Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1836), 977.


57 Othmar Keel, Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst. Eine neue Deutung der Majestätsbilderungen
in Jes 6, Ez 1 und Sach (Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 84/85; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1977),
74-110. He makes the connection based on the winged serpent motif on stamps on Iron Age seals.
Yet, this theory is not without its flaws. For example, the iconographic evidence used to support this theory has serpents with either two or four wings, but never six like in Isaiah 6. Proponents of the theory claim that this discrepancy is just Isaiah’s way of putting his own stamp on a traditional motif. One might also note that none of the iconography has the wings covering any part of their bodies as in Isaiah do. Also,

It is tempting to associate this aspect of the vision scenario with the cult object in the Jerusalem temple known as Nehushtan, a bronze serpent with healing powers of Mosaic origin to which incense was offered (2 Kgs 18:4; cf. Num 21:6, 8-9). This would at any rate explain the altar and the hot coals, hardly consistent with the primary image of a throne room or audience hall.

The plural ending on the noun indicates that there is more than one seraph, but the exact number is impossible to determine, though the suggestion that there are only two and the ending is actually a dual no longer in use is debated. Kaiser originally claimed that since a choral arrangement is here depicted, such an arrangement would be challenging for only two beings. Thus it would be best to understand the ending as a standard plural rather than an archaic dual. Yet, the text specifically says that “one” called to “another,” and if those terms are taken literally, there is no reason to assume that there are

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58 Wildberger, Isaiah 1-12, 264.


any more than two. However, the number of seraphim does not affect the issue of membership or their role in the council.

The second criterion, being a witness, is also met by seraphim and has generated a debate regarding their physical position. Oswalt is careful to point out that, “The Hebrew says they were ‘over’ God, but that need not be taken literally. The servants were standing, as it were, while the king was seated. Thus they were literally above him, but still on the same plane as he (attending him Gen. 45:1; Judg. 3:19; 2 Sam. 13:9).” This concern seems unnecessary as the comment is clearly about physical location rather than authoritative hierarchy. Not that one cannot connote the other, but here there is no other indication that seraphim might hold a superior position, and their worship of Yahweh should be viewed as an implicit indication of his superiority over them.

Another theory is that judgment is the main issue. This fits with the council setting in which the vision occurs. Hartenstein examines the significance of the verb מלא in the passage. A semantically-equivalent verb is also prominent in the Hittite tradition when the storm-god Telipinu disappeared and the temple filled with smoke, which resulted in the whole country being laid to waste. Considering the parallels of filling, shaking, and desolation that can be found within Isaiah 6, this makes a good comparison.

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64 Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah, 178.

65 Ibid., 171-72.

66 Hartenstein, "Cheribim and Seraphim," 162.

67 Harry A. Hoffner, Hittite Myths (Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 14-37.
However, in Isaiah 6 these features are related to the very presence of Yahweh rather than the removal of the God. Even if one accepts the judgment theory, s/he does not need to abandon the holiness hypothesis: Isaiah 6 “seems to point to the judgment of YHWH as an aspect of his holiness.” The presence of fire and the role it plays in the narrative further supports this position.

The purification ritual that undertake meets the involvement criterion. Throughout the ancient Near East the Mischwesen, hybrid beings, were used in connection with royalty and ruling or to represent power. In this scene, are connected with royalty in the sense that Yahweh is the King of Heaven and seated on his royal throne. This is confirmed by the cultic action that take. In this scene, it is one of who purifies Isaiah. This is mirrored in Zechariah 3. However, it is important to notice that the scene in Zechariah 3 is clearer, as an accusation is voiced (despite being rebuked), and the purification takes place during the resulting discussion, whereas there is no discussion or multiple divine beings present in Isaiah 6. Therefore, the parallels with Zechariah 3 suggest that are members of the Council of Yahweh. Yet it is also important to note that despite playing a role in the function of the council, these beings do not participate in the discussion regarding fates and the closest they come to judgment is in the action to purify Isaiah. Thus, these elements also need to be taken into consideration when discussing the structure of the council and the roles

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69 Hartenstein, "Cheribim and Seraphim," 172. Emphasis is in the original. This is echoed in Oswalt, The Book of Isaiah, 181.

various characters play.

At first glance it seems clear that מלאך should be considered members of the Council of Yahweh. After all, in Zechariah 3, מלאך is named, witnesses the activity of the council and is involved in it by acting and speaking without any form of censure and is even depicted as speaking for Yahweh. In addition מלאך is filling an official position, a position similar to the modern defense attorney.  

Despite these clear arguments in favour of member status, there are two complications, one of membership itself, and the other of function. The question is not whether מלאך in Zechariah is a member, but rather can all מלאכים be considered members when only one of the group is ever mentioned in the Council of Yahweh corpus? Though I think it is possible that all מלאכים, perhaps as part of בני האלהים and/or the Hosts of Heaven when these groups are included in the Council of Yahweh, were included in the council, without textual evidence to support that position I will only refer to מלאך as a member.

The second issue is also complicated because it deals with this character’s function, particularly in relation to Yahweh. The key issue is the ambiguity between the identity of מלאך and Yahweh. Handy says,

In the Bible, the messengers usually are presented as subservient creatures who do only the will of Yahweh; however, there are some examples in

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71 Because of the confusion between מלאך and Yahweh in this passage Petersen claims that מלאך is in fact the judge and Yahweh is absent from the scene; see David L. Petersen, Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 (Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 191.

which the distinction between Yahweh and the messenger becomes confused. . . . It has sometimes been argued that the phrase יְהֹוָה מלאך is a technical term for the manifestation of Yahweh and therefore means the god in person rather than a messenger sent by the deity.\textsuperscript{73}

The debate about whether or not the titles Yahweh and יְהֹוָה מלאך are synonymous has merit. However, it is not the case that the two character names are merely interchangeable, since both beings have distinct identities and actions in some texts. Thus, when this phenomenon occurs there must be a reason for it.

Zech 3:2 reads that “Yahweh said to the Satan, ‘Yahweh rebuke you, Satan. Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you.’” If this were indeed Yahweh speaking, then the reader would expect him to use the personal pronoun “I” rather than his personal name “Yahweh.” Also, Yahweh has not been mentioned as present in this vision prior to this speech. The strangeness of form here has caused Petersen to claim that Yahweh is not present in this scene at all and that his absence in favour of מלאך is due to the presence of a human being. He says, “The malʾāk is, quite simply, the supreme authority in the council. He acts in place of the normal supreme authority, Yahweh. . . . The visions are at a distance of one removed from the deity himself. . . . Hence, it would have been inappropriate for the deity himself to appear, even in his normal role in the divine assembly.”\textsuperscript{74} Furthermore, he uses Zech 3:5 to emphasize the importance of המלאך’s presence.\textsuperscript{75} His point here is extremely interesting. One does not have to conclude, as Petersen does, that Yahweh is absent from the scene, but perhaps the character confusion that takes place in this passage is due to the presence of a human being. Yet, the LXX

\textsuperscript{73} Handy, \textit{Among the Hosts of Heaven}, 157-58.

\textsuperscript{74} Petersen, \textit{Haggai and Zechariah}, 190-91.

\textsuperscript{75} He states, the presence of מלאך “serves again to indicate both Yahweh’s absence and yet his control of the situation through a divinely designated agent”: Ibid., 191.
and the Vulgate both identify the initial character as Yahweh.

Alternately, Meier notes this phenomenon and claims three possible explanations for the confusion: the first is that this is Yahweh in theophanic form, but he dismisses this as overly simplistic, especially as it ignores the significance of subordination. The second proposal is that this being is the pre-incarnate Christ and thus the two beings are separate and yet one. This too he dismisses because it relies on later theology. The third proposal is that the genitive of הֶמוֹנָא is a later addition on theological grounds and this option is the one he determines to be most likely. He states, “The word malʾāk was inserted in certain contexts because of theological discomfort with Yahweh appearing as a שָׁטָן adversary (Numbers 22), or in visible form or with the actions of a man (Gen 16:13; Judges 6:13; cf. Gen 22:14), or in contexts where the actual presence of God was otherwise theologically troublesome (Exod 4:24).” While his theory is reasonable, there are many cases where Yahweh himself acts or speaks to people directly and those texts were not redacted (e.g., Exod 34:5-6; 2 Sam 24:1; Job 40). Thus, his explanation is not satisfactorily complete. Meyers and Meyers are probably on the right track when they say, “The frequent use of angels as mediators becomes characteristic of exilic and postexilic prophecy. Perhaps as Yahweh becomes more transcendent, the members of his council take on more active and specific roles.” This would fit with the development in heavenly identities that come out in the Second Temple Period, especially in apocalyptic

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77 Ibid., 58.

78 Meyers and Meyers, Haggai, Zechariah 1-8, 183.
literature.

The presence of המלך among the members of the council demands that the interpreter question whether one can use המלך texts that are not set in the council to understand better the role of המלך within the council. A distinction might be made between the function of המלך in and outside of his role in the council. Hamori says, “It appears that the category malʾākîm incorporates a wide variety of forms and functions, sometimes seeming linked only by their shared title.”\(^{79}\) המלכים literally means “the messengers,” but in council texts this is not the role המלך plays. In Heaven, he appears in the role of human advocate (Job 33:23-26)\(^{80}\) and at times is even the counterpart to the accuser of humanity (Zechariah 3). Council messages tend to be delivered by הרוח or prophets.

**The Thousands upon Thousands**

These beings appear in the council chamber in the text of Daniel 7, which means they met the second criterion. However, they do not meet either of the other two criteria, being named or involved. Therefore, they would not be considered members of the council. A modern parallel would be to see these characters as similar to the audience that watches CSPAN. Daniel 7 does not provide much insight into these beings, but that

\(^{79}\) Hamori, “When Gods were Men”, 155.

\(^{80}\) While this scene may not actually occur in Heaven, it is likely that Job is calling out for justice from the divine council. The context of the plea is judgment and condemnation, which falls within the parameters of the council. Crying out for “a mediator” would indicate that there be some kind of discussion and it is made clear that this mediator is a being other than Yahweh, but that this being is divine. Also, while the human being is facing judgment, this passage would indicate that this human being does not have access to the Council of Yahweh and thus must rely on a divine figure to plead his case. This could have interesting implications in a discussion about human beings and the Council of Yahweh. For more on the relationship between these verses and the divine council, see Marvin Pope, *Job: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Anchor Bible 15; New York: Doubleday, 1973), 251.
does not mean that it is useless for the purposes of the current study. Whether or not one takes the description literally or hyperbolically, it lets the reader know that Heaven, and more particularly the council, is densely populated. This is particularly interesting in light of the small number of council members singled out within the council texts of the Hebrew Bible; even in comparison with the extensive Ugaritic council these large-scale numbers would be overwhelming. Their role would be to attend Yahweh, but there is nothing to indicate that they participate in the discussion. This of course does not mean that these beings are members of the inner circle of the council nor that they have significant roles to play within its structure. Therefore, they are not members.

**The Interpreting Persona**

What to call the character who interprets the events in Daniel 7 for the prophet is slightly problematic. It has become typical to refer to this being as the *angelus interpres*; however, this title is not completely accurate and potentially misleading.81 While it seems inappropriate to refer to a character in a Semitic text by a Latin version of a Greek term, there are larger reasons to reject this title for this particular character. There are two issues with using this title to refer to this character: 1) There is no indication in the text that this character is a מלאך; 2) The interpretation provided here does not appear to be an official act. While there are many מלאכים throughout the Hebrew Bible, rarely do they

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81 This title has become commonplace for a variety of Old Testament characters, but this amalgamation is more of a creation than a true homogeny. For example, the “man” in Ezekiel 40-48 is often referred to by this term, but this character is more of a divine tour guide than an interpreter. See Karin Schöpflin, "God's Interpreter. The Interpreting Angel in Post-Exilic Prophetic Visions of the Old Testament," in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception* (ed. Tobias Nicklas, Friedrich V. Reiterer and Karin Schöpflin, Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2007; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 198. Greater clarity, more distinction, and attention to terminology are necessary for further study of this (or more accurately these) character(s).
occur in council settings, only in Zechariah 3, nor is there any reason to assume that all attendants are actually מלאכים. In fact, the variety of characters discussed within this chapter should be enough to provide evidence to the contrary. Hence, the term persona is used rather than angelus.\(^82\) This discussion demonstrates that the interpreting persona does not meet the first criterion, being named,\(^83\) but does meet the second of witnessing the council, which is clear from its ability to interpret the council to Daniel.

The issue of involvement is more difficult to resolve. His interpretive role could certainly remind anyone who has been a student of the experience of being in class, not understanding the teacher, and turning to the person next to her/him for clarification. The fellow student has no particular job to interpret the teacher, but s/he will usually reply with an interpretation. While the context might be different, almost everyone can relate to this type of experience. The question here then is does this persona have an official role that relates to interpretation or is his role a mere matter of circumstance? In addition, one needs to question whether this incident should be combined with the interpreting actions of Gabriel in Daniel 8. There, Yahweh sees that Daniel is afraid and does not understand, so he instructs Gabriel to interpret for Daniel (v. 16). It is not unreasonable to amalgamate these two beings, considering they are found in the same book, the vision series, and employ the same motif.\(^84\) It would also not be unreasonable for Yahweh to

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\(^{82}\) The choice of “persona” over a term like “being” is merely one of style and was chosen in an attempt to mesh with traditional terminology while disputing its veracity.

\(^{83}\) One might be tempted to parallel this character to that of the One Like a Son of Man, however, this is not a good parallel. The One Like a Son of Man is not named or titled in the same sense as מלאך or הרוה, but is given an identifying phrase within the text that can be used in a similar fashion. The debate around what to call the interpreting persona exist precisely because the text does not provide any identifying phrase or name for this character.

\(^{84}\) Schöpflin, “God’s Interpreter,” 199.
choose the same being that was chosen by Daniel himself in the previous chapter.

Gabriel reappears in Dan 9:21-23, but this time he flies, which should make one wonder if he should be understood as a נביא rather than a מלאך. This identification becomes even more likely when one compares Gabriel touching the prophet in Dan 8:18 to the cleansing in Isa 6:6-7. It is interesting that Gabriel is also referred to as a “man” in Daniel 9. If this character is the same as the interpretive persona in Daniel 7, then it raises interesting questions about humanity and the Council of Yahweh. Both of these connections are strengthened further if the interpreting being in Dan 10:5-6 is also the same one.

Regardless of whether these characters can be amalgamated, this being is not a member of the council simply because of the interpretive action. Because the action is not integral to the functioning of the council (and might only be present because divine interpretation is a part of the genre of apocalyptic literature), this relates more to the role of Daniel as an observer than a necessary/formal part of the council itself.

**One Like a Son of Man**

The One Like a Son of Man is named, which meets the first criterion. He meets this criterion because he is identified in a way that distinguishes him from other characters. While it is clear that this naming fits the criterion, it is also unusual compared to the other characters examined so far and thus deserves further exploration. Due to the

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85 Cherubim also have wings (Exod 25:20; 37:9; 1 Kings 6:27; 8:7; 1 Chron 28:18; 2 Chron 3:13; 5:8; Ezek 10:5, 8, 16, 19; 11:22) and thus are another possibility.

86 The action is different, trance breaking versus purification, but both characters use touch in order to accomplish their goals.

87 The relationship between humanity and the Council of Yahweh will be explored in Chapter Six.
symbolic nature of apocalyptic writing and the context of Daniel 7, one does not need to view the “one like a son of man” as a title of a particular member of the council, but it could be a symbolic reference to a particular member. Within the context, Collins claims the character’s symbolism is the most important factor in determining his role. He says, “Daniel 7 does not make an explicit identification, but leaves the figure deliberately enigmatic. The important point is that he is a heavenly figure and represents the supernatural power supporting the persecuted Jews.” This may be true for an exegetical exploration of the passage. However, in order to gain insight into membership in Yahweh’s council, one must determine the character’s identity.

The first question to consider is whether or not this is a divine being. There are those who view this figure as a human being, since the standard grammatical construction of “son of” usually indicates a member of the group that follows the preposition. Towner introduces the questions involved saying,

Is he to be understood as a single individual or the embodiment of a collective entity of some kind? Is he one of the persons known by the Old Testament writers to be in heaven already because they were translated, such as Enoch (Gen 5:24) or Elijah (II Kings 2:12)? Is he one of those persons exceptional for having known God intimately (Adam, Abraham, Moses, or David)? Is he one of those preexistent figures already known in Judaism (the personified wisdom, Prov. 8:22-31; the suffering servant, Isa. 52:13-53:12; or the Messiah, the anointed one of David, Ezek. 37:24-28)? Or is he some hitherto unknown entity, now making his totally unexpected appearance?

Thus, the figure’s identity, if human, has been the subject of much debate. Jeffery views


89 See Chapter Two, page 27 for more information on the grammatical usage. In addition, this line of interpretation ignores the relevance of the initial כ preposition.

90 W. Sibley Towner, Daniel (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 103.
the setting of Daniel 7 as either a Semitic new king ritual or an Achaemenid throne presentation ceremony. This would fit with ancient Near East kings sometimes being referred to as a son of god, but this parallel does not seem to account adequately for the phrase “son of man.” Hartman and Di Lella turn to parallels in the Myth of the Solar Heavenly Man, Iranian rites of enthronement, the Enthronement of Marduk, and solar rites from Tyre. Smith draws parallels to the phrase at Ugarit and also claims this meaning for Job 25:6. This usage also occurs in 11QtgJob 9:9 and 26:2-3. There are four main suggestions about his identity: 1) the Davidic king; 2) a (high) priest; 3) the messiah; and 4) the representative of Israel.

Beyond the construct chain there are other arguments in favour of a human

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94 Collins, Daniel, 1, 2 Maccabees, 305.

95 P. Mosca, "Ugarit and Daniel 7: A Missing Link," Biblica 67 (1986), 496-517. Goldingay makes a strong case against this position, which can be summarized with his statement: “Seeing the humanlike figure as the fulfillment of Israel’s hopes of a coming king does draw attention to links between Dan 7 and Dan 1-6. Dan 7 is concerned with God’s reign in the world, not with God’s temple in Jerusalem”: John E. Goldingay, Daniel (Word Biblical Commentary 30; Dallas: Word, 1989), 170.


understanding. Goldingay says, “The visionary portrayal of him coming with the clouds of the Heavens might simply signify that he comes by God’s initiative and as his gift, without suggesting that he is in himself other than human.”goldingay In addition, he argues that Exod 24:18 has Moses having a theophany within a cloud and Psalm 2 presents God as begetting and installing the chosen king despite the king’s humanity. However, one should note that an encounter with God in a cloud on a mountain is quite different than flying on a cloud in the air.\textsuperscript{100} Goldingay himself also notes the weakness of this argument when he points out that only god(s) comes “in/on” the clouds in the biblical canon.\textsuperscript{101} The צו preposition used in relation to clouds has caused significant discussion regarding the human or divine nature of this character. Towner summarizes the issue:

\begin{quote}
About the son of man we learn first of all that he comes into the scene ‘with the clouds of heaven.’ The phrase seems simple enough, but the preposition ‘with’ is susceptible of several nuances, including ‘together with,’ ‘by means of,’ or ‘on.’ If one like a son of man is riding on the clouds (LXX-Dan), perhaps he is descending from heaven with them coming together with clouds (Theod-Dan), the reasonable implication would be that the son of man is riding up from earth, rising as clouds do on the horizon. The issue between these two understandings of the simple preposition ‘with’ is the issue between theophany (the son of man as a divine figure being brought down on clouds at the appropriate moment of disclosure) and apotheosis (the son of man as an earthly figure being lifted to heavenly heights in order to be awarded the dominion).\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

The parallels between this character and Baʿal from Ugaritic are particularly apparent

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{goldingay ''The grounds for identifying the humanlike figure as the Davidic anointed are circumstantial ones. There are no direct pointers to this in the text, though as the one whom God commissions to exercise his kingly authority, the humanlike figure fulfills the role of the anointed one, whether or not he is actually an earthly Davidide;'' Goldingay, Daniel, 170.}
\footnote{100 As was pointed out to me in a personal communication from Dr. John L. McLaughlin.}
\footnote{goldingay, Daniel, 171. This happens with human beings in Josephus, Ant. 4.4.48; Acts 1:9; 1 Thess 4:17.}
\footnote{Towner, Daniel, 105.}
\end{footnotes}
with the connection to clouds. Ba`al is known as “the rider on the clouds” (e.g., CAT 1.2 IV 8, 29; 1.3 II 40; 1.3 III 38; 1.3 IV 4, 6; 1.4 III 11, 18; 1.4 V 60; 1.5 II 7), which is one way to understand the phrase in Daniel 7. This parallel would seem to indicate that the figure in Daniel should be interpreted as divine; however, this is not necessarily the case. The phenomenon of de-divinizing Canaanite deities or foreign gods is common, and to parallel Ba`al, the main threat to Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible, with a human would be a strong statement regarding the ultimate position of the rider on the clouds. Yet, this is most likely not the best way to understand the statement here. Since the ancient mythology is an important component of disguising the dating and message of the apocalyptic book, the symbols are meant to parallel the intended understanding rather than critique it.

In fact, there is much evidence to support a heavenly identity for this figure. Support for this understanding comes from several sources. Within the book of Daniel, Gabriel appears in human form to interpret the vision in chapter 8, and again in chapters 10 and 12 heavenly beings appear in human form. In addition, Collins argues, “the ‘son of man’ in the Similitudes of Enoch, a Jewish work heavily dependent on Daniel, is said to be like one of the holy angels (1 Enoch 46:1).”103 Collins’ point here is interesting. The emphasis must be put on the preposition.104 He presents a situation that is the reverse of the one present in Daniel 7; in 1 Enoch a son of man is like a heavenly being, but in Daniel 7 a heavenly being is like a son of man. It is clear that the son of man in 1 Enoch is not divine but shares characteristics with the heavenly beings. Thus in Daniel 7

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104 Sharon Pace, Daniel (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary 17; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 245.
the one like a son of man is not a human being, but shares characteristics with humans.

Some scholars attempt to identify this celestial character with other celestial characters known either in Second Temple literature or within the book of Daniel itself. The most dominant of these theories is that the one like a son of man is the celestial being Michael. Collins, the major proponent of this theory, summarizes his position: “Michael in chapter 10 is the patron and representative of the Jewish people. When he triumphs, they triumph. Similarly in chapter 7, if the kingdom is given to the ‘holy ones’ it is equally given to the people of the holy ones, the faithful Jews. In light of chapter 10, the ‘one like a son of man’ may well be identified with Michael, representative and leader at once of the heavenly host and of the Jewish people.”

The argument has merit in that it focuses on the ultimate purpose of the one like a son of man and it presents a consistent portrayal of characters with the book of Daniel. Yet, if Collins is correct then one must wonder why the connection is not made explicit in the text.

Not all scholars have attempted to identify this council member with a specific figure, either human or celestial. Goldingay sees such an attempt as a violation of the intent of this passage. He states,

If the figure is Michael, or Gabriel, or any other specific individual, it is odd that he appears only here and not in vv 18, 22, and 27 . . . . Later chapters must not be read back into this one . . . . Chap. 7 invites us to focus on the humanlike figure’s role rather than its identity. Indeed, it has been argued that the humanlike figure’s failure to appear in the interpretative section of the vision indicates that it is not a particularly important feature of the chapter.

This particular position fits with what is generally known about council members in the

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106 Goldingay, Daniel, 172.
Hebrew Bible. Rarely do celestial council members have an identity, but usually are identified by function or position (cf. הרוח, הרוחות, etc.). In addition, Goldingay’s claim that this figure is unimportant in this section has merit in that the focus of the interpretive section is on the result, not the character. Even Collins, who Goldingay is denouncing in the previous quotation, notices the absence of this character in the interpretation:

In the angel’s interpretation in vss. 17-18, the ‘one like a son of man’ is not explicitly identified. Instead we are told the ‘saints of the Most High’ will receive the kingdom that was given to the ‘one like a son of man’ in the vision. This does not mean that he is a collective figure, identical with them, but it does mean that he represents them in some way.107

This provides a very interesting parallel to Zechariah 3. Most commentators see Joshua as a representative of a larger group of humans, but Joshua is the only one present within the council.108 If both these characters are meant to represent a larger group of humans, then both narratives represent a council paradigm in which a council member takes on the group persona without direct access to the council, but whose fate is being decided by said council.

In addition, Redditt notices that, “The one like a human came to the One Ancient of Days and was presented before him as a loyal subject to a sovereign.”109 This is consistent with the way in which other council members present themselves before Yahweh, but this might just be expected behaviour before the deity, and this presentation meets the second criterion, witnessing the council. All members defer to Yahweh and are subject to his initiations and commands; thus the presentation of the One Like a Son of

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108 For a detailed discussion, see Chapter Three, pages 81-87.

109 Paul L. Redditt, Daniel (The New Century Bible Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 129.
Man in a way that is consistent with a subject before a ruler fits within the expected behaviour of a council member before Yahweh. The third criterion, involvement, is a little more ambiguous. The One Like a Son of Man does not actually participate in any council activities or discussion. His role in the council (e.g., he is given “dominion”) more clearly parallels the commissionings of Isaiah and Joshua and thus will be considered with them in the following chapter on structure.

**Human Beings**

The following section may appear out of place in a discussion about a “divine” council. Yet, in order to avoid assumptions and because there are human characters in the Council of Yahweh passages, these characters need to be explored according to the three membership criteria, the first of which can be addressed for all the characters at once. The first criterion is that the character is named, and each of the following characters have personal names that are used in the respective passages. Below I explore each of these characters according to the other two criteria.

**Micaiah ben Imlah/Zechariah**

The connection between prophets and the Council of Yahweh has long been noted. For the purpose of this chapter, two prophets should be considered together: Micaiah ben Imlah and Zechariah. Both prophets are witnesses to the actions of the council and the judgments made there. Yet neither prophet is an involved participant, nor is either directly commissioned by the council. In 1 Kings 22 Micaiah ben Imlah is

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summoned before the kings of Israel and Judah in order to advise them regarding God’s will for war with Ramoth-Gilead. During his prophecy Micaiah is able to view the Council of Yahweh in order to witness the deliberations and learn its will regarding his prophecy. Similarly Zechariah is shown the council in order to witness the “trial” of Joshua. Thus both prophets meet the witness criterion, even if it is metaphorical, but fail to meet the involvement criterion.\footnote{111} 

**Daniel**

The case of Daniel is slightly different than the other two humans just discussed. At the beginning of the vision it appears that Daniel is granted access into the council through a dream to serve as a witness of the case before the Ancient of Days, thus, meeting criterion two. However, unlike Zechariah and Micaiah ben Imlah, he does not remain a silent observer, but interacts with and solicits information from one of those gathered, which could be understood to meet the involvement criterion. Yet, he still does not actively participate within the council itself, nor is he a part of the formal process as anything other than an observer.

**Joshua**

The case of Joshua is quite different than the previous three human beings. The first major difference is that Joshua is a priest not a prophet. The council is the realm of the prophets, who have limited access to it in order to provide messages of warning to God’s people (cf. Jer 23:18, 21-22).\footnote{112} Yet, Joshua does not wear the prophetic mantle,\footnote{111} This dichotomy is explored further in the following Chapter, see page 143. 

so the suggestion that he is a member of the Council of Yahweh is radical. While it may be radical, Joshua meets the witness criterion, and he is given explicit access to the council (“the ones standing here”), which meets the involvement criterion. This type of unlimited inclusion in the council appears to go beyond the access that was granted to Micaiah, Zechariah, and Daniel.

Isaiah

Isaiah also provides an interesting twist on the human prophetic observer member of the council hypothesis. While Isaiah is a prophet and thus should have access to the Council of Yahweh, he is not only a witness, like the other prophets in this study, he is also involved, which means he meets all three of the membership criteria. In fact, there are several parallels between the actions of Isaiah and רוח of 1 Kings 22. In each case, Yahweh seeks a volunteer to be commissioned with a mission from the council and the member, Isaiah and רוח, volunteer for the mission. McLaughlin says, “Since Isaiah actually participates in the council meeting whereas Micaiah only observes, Isaiah’s subsequent role more closely parallels that of the spirit in Micaiah’s vision rather than that of his fellow prophet.” This is an important distinction, and since it has already been determined that רוח is a member of the Council of Yahweh, one must consider if by parallel Isaiah is also a member. But despite the numerous parallels between these two characters there is a major difference between them. דוד actually determines the plan of the council when he volunteers to go, but Isaiah merely volunteers for a task without knowing what it might be, which suggests he was not privy to the discussion of the council that decided the fate of the people.

113 McLaughlin, "Their Hearts Were Hardened," 3.
Isaiah is also paralleled to Joshua in that both undergo a cleansing ritual before being given responsibilities (Joshua by being given complete access to the council and Isaiah by being able to participate by volunteering for the earthly mission). Even in this, Isaiah demonstrates more activity than Joshua, in that he initiates or points out his uncleanness, whereas הֶשְׁטֵן is the one to highlight this in Zechariah. Yet, in contrast to this, Isaiah shows less initiative than רוח, who not only volunteers for his mission, but actually conceives of it himself. Thus both characters are members of the Council of Yahweh, but function at different levels of membership.

**Conclusions**

In this chapter, I examined the various characters that could potentially be viewed as members of the Council of Yahweh. Each character was looked at in terms of three criteria. The first is that the character had to be identifiable either by name or title. The second is that they needed to be present, even if that presence was accomplished in a dream or vision state. Finally, they had to engage in activity related to the function of the council. This final criterion will be important for the discussion that follows in Chapter Five. The resulting list of characters is: Yahweh, הֶשְׁטֵן, רוח, שרפיםה, המלך, the One Like a Son of Man, and human beings. The next chapter will explore the types of membership and agency that occur in the Council of Yahweh. Chapter Six will explore the relationships between the human beings and the Council of Yahweh in more depth.

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114 Several of the characters in this chapter were determined not to be members. These include Micaiah ben Imlah, Zechariah, Daniel and the Thousands upon Thousands.
CHAPTER FIVE: SYNCHRONIC ANALYSIS

Introduction

Now that the Council of Yahweh corpus has been explored for potential members and their functions, it is important to explore whether a structure emerges when the texts and characters are looked at as a whole. As stated in the introduction, the studies about structure to date propose a four-tier structure throughout the ancient Near East, but with various answers regarding the Hebrew Bible. Here I propose a new understanding of the council structure that will be based completely on the function of characters rather than on the characters themselves because of the difficulty regarding identity. Thus some characters may fit into more than one category of membership. The structure also determines degrees of membership or agency within the Council of Yahweh. This allows for the narrow definition of membership to be upheld, but also provides a comprehensive understanding of those involved in the work of the council.

Challenges to Proposing a New Structure

Before proceeding any further, some preliminary remarks should be made. By suggesting a structural framework for the Council of Yahweh, one is engaging in a systematic synchronic study of the texts and is therefore focusing more on the literary form. This type of analysis does not allow for a detailed history of religions approach that examines the differences and diversities within the Hebrew Bible itself, not to

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1 See Chapter One, pages 5-9.
mention the insights gained through anthropology and archaeology. A minor example of this is Jeremiah’s insistence that a true prophet is one who has access to the council (Jer 23:18, 22), while Hosea or Micah do not appear to have any knowledge of the council whatsoever. So while I acknowledge that there are various strands of tradition within the material that I am working with, these differences will not be the focal point of this particular study. What I am seeking at this juncture is an overall paradigm regarding the structure of the Council of Yahweh that can be contrasted and compared to the structure in other ancient Near Eastern cultures in future research. At the same time this proposed structure would continually need to be evaluated from within using a history of Israelite Religion approach. With this in mind, I turn now to my fresh proposal regarding the structure of the Council of Yahweh.

**Tier One**

The natural place to begin a structural exploration is at the top. In the case of the Hebrew Bible, it would be reasonable to hypothesize that Yahweh, being the chief god, would be located at the top of the council and that he would be alone in that primary position.² In Chapter Two, I explored whether all divine councils in the Hebrew Bible should be considered Council of Yahweh texts. Also, in that Chapter, I outlined criteria for determining a council text. At that point, one criterion distinguished a divine council text from a Council of Yahweh text, notably the participation of Yahweh in a leadership role. To avoiding making assumptions, I explored whether Yahweh appeared in each of the texts and whether he took on a leadership role (cf. the LXX of Deut 32:8). In

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²I will refer to this level of the structure as a tier from here forward to maintain continuity with the previous studies on divine council structure. Also, the question of whether all Israelite religion would have viewed a solitary Yahweh on the top tier will be addressed in Chapter Seven, see pages 154-57.
addition, it is an assumption that there is a leader of the council no matter how reasonable this seems. In each text, Isaiah 6, 1 Kings 22, Job 1-2, Zechariah 3, and Daniel 7, I demonstrated that Yahweh was not only present, but also controlled the agenda of the meeting and the actions of the members. This exercise of authority demonstrates that Yahweh has a leadership role with power over the rest of the council and would be akin to the first tier in the proposals already presented. Thus, it is appropriate to refer to the Israelite divine council as the Council of Yahweh.

As one might expect, determining a structure for the Council of Yahweh becomes more complicated beyond the top tier. Since there is a universal understanding that Yahweh is the chief god of the nation and therefore is expected to lead its council, it is relatively easy to establish this level of the council. However, the relationship among the other deities and their relationship to Yahweh is less obvious, especially as very few of them appear in the same scene, which would allow the interpreter to analyse their direct interactions. Nor are these other deities described using familial or related language that could help clarify their relationship through an understanding of the ancient Israelite family structure. Yet, this is not the only complication faced at this stage of the investigation. The fact that most of the members of Yahweh’s Council are not referred to by name but by title or by function further complicates efforts to identify where they belong in a structural analysis, or even if these characters are indeed separate deities or merely different manifestations of the same deity performing various roles. Because of this final complication, this structural proposal will focus on functional roles, rather than identity.
The Structure of the Council of Yahweh

Tier Two

My proposed structure comprises three tiers, and four divisions. In addition, I name three character categories that have some relationship to the Council of Yahweh, but whose occupants are not members of the council. As has already been stated, the first tier comprises the chief god, Yahweh. Also, like other ancient Near East cultures, members on the second tier are the most actively involved in the actual function of the council. I call this tier “the councilors” based on how these characters function in the text. I divide this tier into two divisions in order to demonstrate that there is no observable hierarchy among these divisions, but rather a heterarchy. This allows for systems to relate to one another laterally rather than vertically. The roles and functions of each division are different but each division demonstrates an ability to act within the council, to speak within the council, and to demonstrate some form of initiative in that setting, though this last criterion is severely limited. Therefore, they have been presented here as equal but different.

Court Officials

The first division of councilors is the “court officials.” These are the gods who take an active role in court proceedings, such as השטן and יהוה מלאך. A good example of this is Zechariah 3 where השטן acts as a prosecutor and יהוהמלאך positions himself as the defense attorney. This goes against the grain of Handy’s theory, which would put מלאך on the fourth tier based on the translation of its name.³ Hesier summarizes this understanding when he states,

³Lowell K. Handy, Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 152-54.
Specialists in Israelite religion who have focused on the divine council are apparently in agreement that, unlike the Ugaritic texts, at no point are the biblical מלאכים, אלים, אלהים ever specifically designated מלאכים, אלים, אלהים in the Hebrew text. Thus in the consensus view of the Israelite council are not only a separate class and at the lowest level of the heavenly bureaucracy, but they are not regarded as ontologically equivalent to the בני האלהים, אלים, אלהים.\(^4\)

However, this is not a good understanding of the actual function of המלאך in the council. Despite the translation of the name, המלאך does not function as a messenger, but directly participates in the judgment section of Zechariah 3.

**Advisors**

The second division is the “advisors.” These are the gods Yahweh consults when formulating a plan or to receive status reports. In 1 Kings 22, Yahweh addresses the council in order to gain its input as to how to proceed with killing the King of Israel. רוח, the prototype of an advisor, steps forward with a plan for Yahweh’s approval. Again, this division is made based on function, and therefore a council member can be a court official and an advisor. השטן is one such character as he functions as a court official in Zechariah 3, but as an advisor in Job 1-2.

**Tier Three**

The third tier in this structure is radically different than tier three in Smith’s and Handy’s structure and consists of two divisions.\(^5\) I call this tier the “agents.” The agents of the council take on tasks that allow the council to function, but are not directly involved in its primary function (i.e., deliberating and pronouncing judgment). Agents


function both within the heavenly setting of the council and on the earthly plane in order to carry out its mission.

**Court Officers**

The first division is similar to the third tier in other ancient Near East cultures and like that tier is sparsely populated. I call this division “court officers” because it consists of gods who serve the council. The best example of this type of deity is נְשָרֵים in Isaiah 6. While their primary role is to worship Yahweh, they also serve the council by purifying the lips of Isaiah in order to allow for his participation. יהוה מלאך performs a similar purification in Zechariah 3 and in that action would be operating in a tier three function. However, מַלֵּאָךְ יהוה, like other characters, plays a specific and active role in the council, and acts on its own initiative in the council, and thus in that function is included on tier two rather than this tier.

**Commissioned**

The second division, and by far the most controversial, is the “commissioned.” The characters in this division are all given responsibilities that relate to the council as a result of the judgment that the council makes. Both humans and gods appear in this division: הרוח, Isaiah, and Joshua. Sometimes the characters from tier two also appear in this category because they personally take on the mission that they have discussed or proposed in their role as advisors. It remains unclear why there are times that tier two deities sometimes perform the actions of the council instead of the other times when completely different characters are brought in to accomplish these tasks. However, my hypothesis is that if supernatural elements are involved in the mission then a tier two deity is necessary to perform the commissioned activity. For example, control over nature, sickness and health, and life and death in Job 1-2 requires the intervention of
However, if the commissioning does not require divine abilities to perform, then external characters can be used.

There are two council scenes where human beings are brought into the council, allowed to participate in the council, and given access and rights to the council that extend into the future: Isaiah 6 and Zechariah 3. Isaiah speaks without being spoken to, which does not do in Job 1-2, and volunteers for a task in the way that the advisor was able to in 1 Kings 22; the difference is that his message is prophetic and can be delivered by a human being to other humans whereas gives the prophets a deceptive message that they believe comes from the divine directly. In other words, is playing the role with the prophets that the council is playing for Isaiah. So while both characters are acting as commissioned members, there is a hierarchy between those from tier two and those who only appear on tier three.

The case of Joshua is more complicated than that of Isaiah. Joshua is granted access to the council in exchange for “walk(ing) in my ways and keep(ing) my requirements,” and he will also be rewarded with ruling Yahweh’s house and courts. However, “walk(ing) in (Yahweh’s) ways” is the responsibility of all believers, so it is hard to see this as a commission from the council. Yet, this behavior will set Joshua up as “an omen of the things to come” (v. 8), and thus his behavior is a commission of the council to be an example for the future.⁶

While this division is controversial because it involves placing human beings into the divine council, it is even more radical because it places them with the deities that are second only to Yahweh. Yet, if one uses function as the main criterion for structure then

⁶ This does leave the reader with the complication of Joshua’s “colleagues” who are also part of the omen, but not part of the council or the reward.
these characters, Isaiah and Joshua, belong on the third tier of Yahweh’s Council. Despite the fact that the One like a Son of Man is likely a divine being, he would also be a part of this division, since the only textual information on this character is a commission, and he takes no part in the discussion nor gives any advice.

**Non-member Categories**

*Observers*

The commissioned should not be confused with those in the first non-member category: the observers. Whether or not this category should be included as part of the council is debatable. These human beings are not actual members, nor do they participate in the council. However, they do serve a purpose for the council and are provided access, albeit limited, to the council and therefore, have been included in this study. While these characters act as messengers, in that they retell the council events that they have observed, they do not fit on the third tier because their agency is not mandated by the council: they are not instructed by the council to pass on their visions. There are four examples of this. The first is Micaiah ben Imlah in 1 Kings 22, who observes the scene in Heaven and recounts it as a means of justifying his divergent prophecy. The second is Zechariah, who in chapter 3 of the book named for him observes the council, but does not participate in it. Daniel and the Thousands upon Thousands would also be considered observers. In many ways, this category is similar to the fourth tier of the Ugaritic pantheon because the characters in this category are used to transmit information regarding the council to other parties (e.g., CAT 1.2 I 22, 26, 28, 30, 41, 42, 44, 1.13.25-26, 1.124.11, 2.17.7, 1.23.5, 2.33.35, 2.36.11, 2.76.3). However, it is different in that

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this category is completely divine in Ugarit and completely human in the Hebrew Bible.\textsuperscript{8} This difference could be accounted for by the evolution towards monotheism that Smith noted.\textsuperscript{9} It also differs in that the messages in Ugarit are intended for other divine beings, but in the Hebrew Bible the messages are meant for human beings.

\textit{Vehicles and Defendants}

There are at least two more categories that relate to the Council of Yahweh, but neither of these should be considered membership categories. The first would be the “vehicles” of the council. An example of this category is the 400 prophets in 1 Kings 22 because they do not participate in the council nor do they witness it, but they are used by the council (through רוח) in order to accomplish the mission of the council. The second category would be the “defendants”; since by nature the council is a judging body, something or somebody needs to be judged. These characters are not members, but are a necessary part of any council. Like the divisions, these categories are not stagnant. For example, Joshua, a defendant, becomes an agent because he is commissioned (see above), whereas the beasts from Daniel 7, who are also defendants, do not because they are found guilty.

\textit{Conclusions}

This synchronic study of the Council of Yahweh mirrors elements of the pantheon structure of other ancient Near East religions, such as the chief god in the leadership role, 

\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., 46. A possible exception in the Hebrew Bible would be the Thousands upon Thousands as these appear to be divine beings. I argued that this was a phrase similar to יהוה בני אלוהים and thus merely a way to refer to multiple deities, but they are present in the council in Daniel 7. Therefore, one could argue that both the Thousands upon Thousands and בני אלוהים should be included in this category. I do not include them because one of the components of this division is that the observers pass on what they have seen. Since there is no evidence of these divine beings doing that, I have excluded them.

\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., 49-50.
a diverse and well-populated second tier, and the presence of messengers. Yet, it also shows that there are major differences between the structure found in the texts of the Hebrew Bible and those found elsewhere in the ancient world. Key differences are the focus on function rather than identity and the role of humanity in the work of the council. Future study regarding these differences should provide more insight into the development within Israelite religion and also provide an additional avenue into Israel’s uniqueness in its ancient Near Eastern context.
CHAPTER SIX: DIACHRONIC ANALYSIS

**Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I explored a holistic picture of the Council of Yahweh. Now it is necessary to explore the diversity among the council texts for insight into the various divine council theologies within Israelite religion. It also becomes important to explore the various composition dates of the texts in order to determine if any linear development can be witnessed with regard to the Council of Yahweh. In the introduction, I hinted that the Council of Yahweh had implications for the theories of monotheism, and at this stage it becomes important to explore those implications. Monotheism is a much larger topic than the Council of Yahweh but these two topics enjoy a circular relationship. The very existence of a council has implications for developing a theory of monotheism, particularly surrounding the once prevalent evolution theory. On the other side, if monotheism truly evolved out of polytheism, then one would expect that the evolution would affect a council that by nature comprises multiple deities. Thus I will begin with a general discussion regarding the current theories of monotheism and then date each of the Council of Yahweh texts in order to explore whether any evolution can be seen within the council and its structure. Particular attention will be placed on the role of human beings within the Council of Yahweh and its implications for a monotheistic understanding.

**Monotheism**

From what is known about the polytheistic world view in Ugarit, Babylon,
Mesopotamia, and Egypt, monotheism would have indeed been unusual in the ancient world of the Hebrew Bible. Yet, with the rise of historical criticism, the assumption that the biblical text represents radical monotheism was questioned. A new theory emerged that Israelite religion, as presented in the texts, represents a development from polytheism to monotheism, with Second Isaiah being the ultimate expression of monotheism.¹ This theory seemed to fit the evidence well, since there are texts that clearly retain traces of an earlier polytheism or the more neutral monolatry, the belief that while multiple gods exist, one god should be worshiped above or to the exclusion of all the others.² However, even this theory needs to be explored, as one cannot draw a straight developmental line from polytheism through monolatry to monotheism. Also, the nature of this monotheism will be examined. Frymer-Kensky developed the phrase “radical monotheism,” but states that the biblical corpus represents a stage on the route to radical monotheism but does not contain its full expression.³ Pakkala represents another view when he states, “Although monotheism may be characterized as its child, ironically the OT itself is not monotheistic.”⁴ While the problem of understanding monotheism could be explored

¹ André Lemaire, The Birth of Monotheism: The Rise and Disappearance of Yahwism (Washington: Biblical Archaeological Society, 2007), 10, 105-08. It should be noted that although Lemaire states that Deutero-Isaiah was the beginning of monotheism, “the development of monotheistic Yahwism did not stop with the genius of Deutero-Isaiah. It took a long time for this idea to become dominant in religious thought, and even longer for it to become common in practice” (p. 10).


through several different avenues, this study will use the lens of the Council of Yahweh in order to explore the relationship between the Hebrew Bible and monotheism. The rise of monotheism bears weight on many elements within the council, especially the relationship between human beings. These texts are not univocal on these topics and the various theologies they reflect, and these differences will be the subject of the rest of this chapter. For this reason, it is important to examine the dating of each text in order to determine whether there are developmental changes in the various theologies presented in the Hebrew Bible.

The biggest interpretive issue with a Council of Yahweh is that by nature it challenges monotheism; not only does a divine council limit the uniqueness of Yahweh, it also suggests that other gods are possible in relation to Yahweh. Moreover, some scholars are leery about even questioning the concept of monotheism; as Becking says, “For many Christians and theologians, biblical monotheism is an apparent and clear proposition that needs no discussion or clarification.” Therefore, the council is often relegated to subordinate status with terms like “divine being” rather than “god” and “angel” rather than מלאך. This observation does not imply that the members of the Council of Yahweh are equal with him but that they, or at least the vast majority of them, are gods. The concern for protecting monotheism or the entrenched belief that the Bible is monotheistic often leads the interpreter down a certain path of interpretation. An example of this is found in the work of Crook who claims that the reference to הָאֵלַהֵים would have been gods in other religions, but not in the biblical text where she calls them 5

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“angels.” This understanding is problematic for three reasons. The first reason is the least significant of the three but still relevant. Crook directly states that the sons of god function differently in other ancient Near Eastern cultures than they do in the Hebrew Bible. While it is true that the Hebrew Bible adapts the common mythology in order to make a unique theological point, it can be a slippery slope to assume that something has different meanings in different cultures merely because it does not fit with an accepted theology. After all, the term is used in the same way in multiple cultures, and the same forms are used throughout the ancient Near East. It seems that the motivating factor in this diverse understanding is to reconcile a council that includes multiple gods with the belief that the biblical text contains a belief in monotheism.

This is related to the use of the term “angel” instead of מלאך or even “sons of god.” The use of the term “angel” is particularly problematic when dealing with the text of the Hebrew Bible. “Angel” is the English word for the Greek term cognate with מלאך, and is not really a title or name at all. Furthermore, it has undergone extensive theological and doctrinal development that has little to do with the text of the Hebrew Bible and much more to do with historical methods of interpretation and the history of church traditions. While this became the dominant theological concept, there is nothing in the word itself to suggest that it would not be used of deities in the ancient Near East. Also, the messengers of the gods in other cultures were considered gods. Therefore, there is no reason to assume that the members of Yahweh’s council fit the more recent angelic definition, rather than being a level of deity.

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6 Margaret B. Crook, The Cruel God: Job's Search for the Meaning of Suffering (Boston: Beacon, 1959), 11.
Ultimately these efforts amount to a fancy game of biblical Balderdash. While one can come up with a creative and plausible definition for the various terms, it amounts to nothing more than a sophisticated game of semantics. However, if one does not allow monotheism to be the guiding principle in interpretation then the depiction of the nature of god in the Hebrew Bible becomes far more complex.

Part of the problem might come from the basic assumptions that are involved. Traditionally there have been two options. The first is that the entire Hebrew Bible represents radical monotheism, and any traces of polytheism are the result of transference from other ancient Near Eastern cultures (syncretism) or remnants of the pre-monotheistic religion. The second option is that Israelite religion underwent various stages of development from polytheism to monolatry to monotheism, and each of these stages are represented in the texts of the respective historical period. The Council of Yahweh is a problem for both these theories. The idea of development is problematic because of the extensive use of council imagery in post-exilic texts (see Zechariah, Daniel, and Job), and if radical monotheism emerges with Second Isaiah then the order of development does not fit. Smith says, “At first glance, Israelite monotheism would seem theoretically to stand at odds with the imagery of Israelite assembly with its multiplicity of divinities, even if they are minor or subservient to Yahweh as their absolute king. In fact, the divine assembly is not oppositional to monotheistic statements in biblical literature.” Smith is able to make this claim because council imagery appears next to

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7 Balderdash is a board game in which a word is given and each of the participants makes up a definition for the word. The goal is to convince as many participants as possible that your created definition is the true definition.

monotheistic statements, particularly in Second Isaiah, which opens with a council-type scene but contains the largest number of “monotheistic” statements in the Hebrew Bible. The point in this literature does not appear to be the absolute denial of other gods, but that Yahweh be held in complete and absolute control of the cosmos. Therefore, it would represent “intolerant monolatry” rather than radical monotheism. If Yahweh has complete power then whether the other beings are divine or not they would be under Yahweh’s power and unworthy of worship. Yet, there is no reason to assume that the Hebrew Bible provides only one answer to the questions regarding the Council of Yahweh and monotheism. While “intolerant monolatry” might explain the material in Second Isaiah, other approaches or stages of development may be present in the other voices within the text.

Now that the scene has been set, I will turn my attention to dating the Council of Yahweh texts and explore the relationship between each text and the concept of monotheism. This process will reveal any pattern or development that might emerge, or it will challenge the notion of a linear progression in the development of the theology of Israelite religion. The relationship between the human characters and the Council of Yahweh, particularly in relationship to the concept of monotheism, will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

**Dating**

**Isaiah 6**

Likely due to the importance of Isaiah in the Second Testament and its role in the development of Christian doctrine, the application of the historical critical method,

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9 The phrase “intolerant monolatry” first appears in Pakkala, *Intolerant Monolatry, passim.*
especially the multiple book theory, to this book caused great controversy.\textsuperscript{10} While there is still not universal acceptance of the tripartite Isaiah,\textsuperscript{11} most modern scholars accept the triple division of the book; however, since Isaiah 6 falls within First Isaiah, the core of which is the work of the eighth century Isaiah ben Amoz, this debate does not need further exploration for the purposes of the present work.

The core of Isaiah 1-39 should be dated between 740-690 BCE and has been traditionally attributed to Isaiah ben Amoz due to the claims of Isa 1:1; 2:1; 7:3; 13:1; 20:2; 37:6, 21; and 38:1.\textsuperscript{12} Chapter 6 opens with a reference to the death of Uzziah, which would date this event to 736/5 BCE.\textsuperscript{13} While scholars have demonstrated that not

\textsuperscript{10} The multiple book theory hypothesizes that the book of Isaiah is actually three books that have been put together. The first book comprises chapters 1-39 and was written during the 8th century. Chapters 40-55 make up the book of Second Isaiah and date to the exile, and the remaining chapters are from the post-exilic author of Trito-Isaiah. For a brief but helpful description of this theory see, Marvin Sweeney, \textit{Isaiah 1-39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature} (The Forms of Old Testament Literature XVI; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 186. Several studies have explored the impact of Historical Criticism on the academy and the church. A good example of one such study that relates to the book of Isaiah is Rebecca G. S. Idestrom, \textit{From Biblical Theology to Biblical Criticism: Old Testament Scholarship at Uppsala University, 1866-1922} (Coniectanea Bibliica: Old Testament Series 47; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000).

\textsuperscript{11} Examples of modern scholars who would not accept the division of Isaiah are J. Alec Motyer, \textit{The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary} (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993); Barry G. Webb, \textit{The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles' Wings} (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996).

\textsuperscript{12} J. Oswalt, \textit{The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1-39} (New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 23, 26. One should note that Blenkinsopp claims that none of these references should be attributed to the historical Isaiah. He says, “Prophetic literature is not self-referential in general and, apart from titles, certainly inserted at a late date (1:1; 2:1; 13:1), the name Isaiah occurs only in annalistic passages deriving from a Deuteronomistic author or from a source closely related to the History (7:3; 20:2-3; 37-39). Furthermore, the fact that no critical scholar attributes the passage introduced by the last of the three above-mentioned titles to Isaiah may serve to illustrate the problematic nature of prophetic attribution in general”: Joseph Blenkinsopp, \textit{Isaiah 1-39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary} (Anchor Bible 19; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 84.

all dates or authorial attributions should be taken literally,\textsuperscript{14} there is no reason to argue that this chapter does not date to the time mentioned, except for a potential gloss in v. 13.\textsuperscript{15} In addition, Watts has questioned whether the “I” in this chapter should be understood as Isaiah because he is not actually named, but he proposes no other candidates.\textsuperscript{16}

For the same reasons that this passage could be disputed as a Council of Yahweh text, it does not present too much difficulty for the concept of monotheism. It is clear that this passage does not represent monotheism, since other divine beings, מִשְׁפָּטֶים, are present. However, it is just as clear that מִשְׁפָּטֶים are subservient to Yahweh as they worship him in verse 3. The reference to “us” comes only after Yahweh’s reference to “I,” which suggests that one comes only after the other.\textsuperscript{17} Thus, this passage at best

\textsuperscript{14} Notably, Kaiser reverses his earlier opinion in the second edition of his Isaiah commentary when he argues that the “hardening of hearts” that is part of Isaiah’s commission is really Deuteronomistic in nature as a way of showing Yahweh’s control over the fate of Israel. He states, “It is certain that this second way of understanding the prophet’s ministry as his call to preach repentance and a change of behaviour is in essential correspondence with the Deuteronomistic picture of the prophet which was developed after the collapse of the state of Judah, and is probably separated from the time of Isaiah’s activity by two whole centuries”: Otto Kaiser, \textit{Isaiah 1-12, A Commentary} (trans. John Bowden, 2nd, Completely Rewritten ed., Old Testament Library; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 120. This is not impossible, especially considering the parallels with 1 Kings 22, but his argument is not the necessary conclusion. The motif of Yahweh “hardening hearts” is found elsewhere in the text without Deuteronomistic influence (see the E and P elements of the Plague Narrative). While McLaughlin has pointed out differences in the usage in Isaiah and these other texts, he also demonstrates the important literary function of this motif for the entire book of Isaiah: John L. McLaughlin, “Their Hearts Were Hardened: The Use of Isaiah 6, 9-10 in the Book of Isaiah,” \textit{Biblica} 75 (1994), esp. 7-9 and 21-25. If McLaughlin is correct, and the evidence suggests that he is, then chapter 6 predates the other material that relies on it or a significant redactional process took place to give it this primary place. The first solution, being the simplest, makes the most sense without additional evidence to the contrary.

\textsuperscript{15} Blenkinsopp, \textit{Isaiah 1-39}, 91. Wildberger does make a good point when he states that the date might have been presented at the beginning of the narrative precisely because it was not written down until a much later date; Wildberger, \textit{Isaiah 1-12}, 259.


\textsuperscript{17} It is possible that the “us” refers to the royal “we” rather than the divine council as has been suggested with the first creation narrative (Gen 1:26), but the judgment included in this passage fits the context of the council better than any plural of majesty. If the Genesis passage is taken as a parallel, the most likely use of “us” is to refer to the council as a whole rather than specific member within that council.
reflects monolatry and perhaps a very radical form of it, since the only specifically mentioned divine beings worship Yahweh, and the unnamed beings are only alluded to by Yahweh himself.

1 Kings 22

The scholarly dating of Kings and the Deuteronomistic History has a long and complicated history. The classic view is that the Deuteronomistic History had its initial composition in the pre-exilic period and underwent a post-exilic editing. In some ways the dating of Kings is not problematic. For example, 2 Kings 25 provides details regarding Jehoiachin that took place during the reign of Awil-Marduk (562-560 BCE), and therefore, the text, or at least that part of the text, cannot date before that time. Also, as it is a source for the Chronicler, the text must predate that book. The author(s) of Kings is transparent about using sources but not clear about when sources are being used nor which sources are used. Even if these things were clear, there is little known about the original sources, and therefore, the interpreter still needs to provide a theory of

Yet, the identity of the “us” is unknown and might merely be a conversation that Yahweh had with השרפים; however, this too would fulfill the requirements for a council text and thus the point is moot.


19 Like many of the books contained in the Hebrew Bible, there are many theories regarding the dating of Chronicles, but one is safe to assume that this composition began after 400 BCE, which would leave a span of 150 years during the post-exilic period in which Kings was written. See Mulder, 1 Kings, 12.

20 There are sources such as the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:19; 15:31; 16:5, 14, 20, 27; 2:39; 2 Kings 1:18; 10:34; 13:8, 12; 14:28; 15:11, 15, 21, 26, 31), the History of the Kings of Judah (1 Kings 15:6, 23; 22:45; 2 Kings 8:23; 12:19; 15:6, 36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17, 25; 23:28; 24:5), and the Book of the Deeds of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41) that are named; however, there are clearly other sources, such as lists and poems that are not. See, Ibid. 1 Kings 8:53a advances the theory that there are additional unnamed sources used in the LXX, which states that the material found in 8:12 derives from the Book of the Song.
composition. There are two potential implications to this understanding of composition. The first is that the theology and the perspective of the DtrH is only found in the material that joins the source material together. Therefore the theology found in the original sources is even more important than the final form. Thus the date of the original composition needs to factor into any understanding regarding the theological perspective about the Council of Yahweh. The other possibility is that the final redactor utilized his/her sources in such a way as to form or even transform the theologies of the original sources, and therefore the date of the final form is the important one for understanding the perspective about the Council of Yahweh. Noth put this overall interpretation of the role of the Deuteronomist forward, and while the details of his theory have been largely challenged over the past few decades, his overarching thesis is widely accepted.

Discussions of authorship have revolved around Noth’s theory that a single author/redactor wrote the books of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, and 1-2 Kings during the

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21 The discussion began with Julius Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuchs und der historischen Bücher des Alten Testaments* (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1963). While this work is primarily known for its discussion of the Pentateuch and Pentateuchal sources, it was also influential in the discussion involving sources in the books of Kings. This was followed by scholars such as Immanuel Benzinger, *Jahvist und Elohist in den Königsbüchern* (Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten Testament. Neue Folge 2; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1921); G. Hölscher, "Das Buch der Könige, seine Quellen und seine Redaktion," in *Eucharisterion Hermann Gunkel zum 60. Geburtstag* (ed. Hans Schmidt, Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments 36; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1923); R. Smend, "JE in den geschichtlichen Büchern des Alten Testament," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 39 (1921), 204-15. These scholars attempted to divide the books of Kings according to classical Pentateuchal sources, namely J and E. Eissfeldt also joined in the discussion but while he supported the notion of sources, he disapproved of the use of Pentateuchal sources as a means of dividing the text as Kings did not fit within the categories of J and E; Otto Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alten Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934), 289-97. For more on this discussion see Simon J. de Vries, *I Kings* (Word Biblical Commentary 12; Waco: Word Books, 1985), xxxix-xl.

sixth century as a means of explaining Israel’s downfall as a nation. He pointed to the linguistic similarities and common ideology throughout these books. This position was strengthened by the attribution of 1-2 Kings to the prophet Jeremiah in Baba Bathra 15a, which makes this claim due to the parallel in Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 24:18 25:30. This proposal has undergone significant critique and modifications, most notably from Jepsen and von Rad. Cross proposed that there were two significant stages in the writing of the DtrH; the first was during the reign of Josiah, and the second was during the exile. Theories of compositional sources have expanded greatly from this point and frequently number in the double digits. De Vries says,

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23 Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomic History* (trans. Jane Doull, John Barton, and Michael D. Rutter, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements Series 15; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), esp 4-11. “The novelty of Noth’s model was neither in the perception of the continuity of these books nor in the observation of their Deuteronomic editing. The Deuteronomic stratum within these books had been recognized long before Noth, but it was understood as editorial overlay(s) on top of the separate books”: Steven L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomic History* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum XLII; Leiden: Brill, 1991), 1. Prior to this new proposal, the most common theory claimed that there was an initial composition before the exile that was followed by an exilic redaction: Ibid., 1. McKenzie clarifies, “It should be stressed that Noth perceived the Deuteronomic History to be an original unit beneath the present books of Deuteronomy and the Former Prophets. Noth found plenty of passages in Deuteronomy through Kings which he took to be later additions to the original work of Dtr… But Noth made no attempt to relate the numerous additions to each other or to contend that they had a common origin. He found no indication, therefore, that Dtr’s History had been systematically revised by a later editor”: Ibid., 2.

24 For a good summary of this theory, see Ibid., 1-3.

25 De Vries, *1 Kings*, xxxix.


All sides agree that other collections of material must have been available to the final redactors besides the three sources that are specifically named in the biblical text—but there has been little agreement as to just what these additional sources may have been. Likewise all agree that an editor-redactor—someone living in the exilic period, later than the last event recorded—brought all this material together into a single book. 29

With this in mind, I will explore the dating of 1 Kings 22.

Cross’ theory is particularly important for the current study, since he divides 1 Kings 22 between Dtr¹ and Dtr². Cross attributes 1 Kgs 22:15-20 to the Dtr². 30 This requires one to abandon the larger discussion of unity and composition and explore the micro-level of this particular chapter. Cross is not the first scholar to propose redaction within the text of 1 Kings 22. Wellhausen placed vv. 1-38 in his “Ephraimite” source (along with 1 Kings 20; 2 Kings 3; 6:24-7:20; 9-10), and thus it was separate from the original Elijah cycle. 31 Driver, Oesterley and Robinson, Snaith, and Steuernagel supported this theory. 32 Noth’s theory had the Deuteronomist placing the pericope in this

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31 Wellhausen, *Die Composition* 283-87.

position in the overall narrative, and Fichtner added that this pericope was not originally about Ahab.\textsuperscript{33} This has not been universally accepted. Pfeiffer and Steuernagel think that only a second Deuteronomistic redactor (550 BCE) could be responsible for this pericope.\textsuperscript{34}

The majority of commentators have not questioned the internal literary unity of vv. 1-38 (other than a few minor glosses: vv. 1-2a, 28b, 35b, 38); an exception is Friedrich Schwally, who claimed that it must be a composite.\textsuperscript{35} This changed when Gray argued that there was a historically reliable biography of Ahab and a prophetic Judean Micaiah story.\textsuperscript{36} Fohrer drew similar conclusions.\textsuperscript{37} Würthwein argued that there were two separate literary sources combined within the text of 1 Kings 22, a sage source and a prophet source, each with its own redactional history.\textsuperscript{38} This leads to the conclusion that

The narrative is now designed as pure propaganda, reflecting the ideological controversy in which the Unheilspropheten, claiming admission into the secret council of God (cf. Jer. 23:22; Isa. 6:1ff.; Amos 3:7; Ezek. 1:1ff.), profess a higher authority than any authority attested merely by possession of the spirit of Yahweh, the claim of the

\textsuperscript{33} Noth, \textit{The Deuteronomistic History}, 69-71; J. Fichtner, \textit{Das Erste Buch van der Könige} (Die Botschaft des Alten Testaments 12,1; Stuttgart: Verlag, 1964), 297-300.


\textsuperscript{35} Friedrich Schwally, "Zur Quellenkritik der historischen Bücher," \textit{Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft} 12 (1892), 159-61.

\textsuperscript{36} Gray, \textit{1 & 2 Kings}, 371-94.


Thus it seems reasonable to conclude that the original narrative underwent redaction at a latter stage, but the evidence for two completely separate sources that are later combined into one is unconvincing. Jepsen claims that there are eight levels of redaction in this section; however, his largest contribution to the study of 1 Kings 22 was to argue convincingly that this narrative should be seen as a prophetic narrative rather than a battle report, and its purpose is to critique die Nabitum (guild of prophets) by staging a confrontation between the Landnabis (lay prophets) and the Hofnabis (court prophets). Ahab’s reign provides a good setting for this “conflict” and that is the reason it is placed here, not because it is an incident from the reign of the historical Ahab.

Thus the latest date proposed for this passage is ca. 550 BCE but it could have been composed up to a hundred years earlier, though still later than Isaiah 6. Like Isaiah 6, this passage at best reflects monolatry because of the presence of divine beings other than Yahweh. But unlike Isaiah 6, it is not a radical version. The characters in this passage are more detailed and developed. While they are still clearly under the leadership and direction of Yahweh, they are asked their opinions and even suggests a course of action and is granted permission to follow through on it.

**Job 1-2**

Appendix F contains a detailed examination of the various dating theories for the Book of Job. I explored the relationship between the prose and poetry and determined

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41 See Chapter Four, pages 111-12.
that due to the many differences between them this dating exploration should focus solely on the prose prologue. Despite traditionally being attributed to Moses, modern dating theories range from the monarchical period to the post-exilic period (sometime between 6th and 3rd centuries BCE). Each of these theories are explored, but ultimately I conclude that the prose prologue should be dated to the post-exilic period. The reasons for this conclusion are: 1) The prologue reflects the shift from community to individual that emerges in the Second Temple period; 2) The rise of wisdom literature during this period; 3) There appears to be influence from Second Isaiah which would mean it must date to a period after its writing; and 4) The character of הרשון is not known before this period.

Once again the two Council of Yahweh narratives found in the book of Job represent monolatry. Also, similar to the previous narrative, 1 Kings 22, it represents a more liberal version than a radical form. Like 1 Kings 22, the majority of the council members are not listed in detail, but one of them emerges in an explicit way. In these passages, הרשון engages in extensive dialogue, questions the opinions of Yahweh, and proposes courses of action, which goes even beyond the actions of רווח in 1 Kings 22. Yet, just like רווח, הרשון is completely at the mercy of Yahweh in that הרשון is required to gain Yahweh’s permission, abide by his limitations, and even wait for him to initiate conversation.

Zechariah 3

Zechariah 3 should be viewed as a part of Proto-Zechariah (chapters 1-8), which is considered and dated separately from Second Zechariah (chapters 9-14) for five

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42 This section of the dissertation is a modified version of my ThM thesis; cf. White, “Purpose and Portrayal,” 67-72.
reasons.\textsuperscript{43} Firstly, there are no visions after chapter 8, and second, chapters 9-14 never make reference to these visions. Third, all references to the reign of Darius, the Jerusalem community, and the temple end after chapter 8. Fourth, Zechariah is specifically named in chapters 1-8, but not in 9-14. Fifth, the two parts use different terminology. Redditt argues that Haggai and Zechariah 1-8 have the same editor based on stylistic similarities.\textsuperscript{44} In 1638, Mede presented another reason, that Jeremiah is the author of Zech 11:12 based on the claim made in Matt 27:9. As a result he claimed that chapters 9-11 should all be attributed to Jeremiah and thus this section would be pre-exilic.\textsuperscript{45}

This is not the only significant division when considering the context of Zechariah 3. Baldwin argues that Zechariah 3 is one of the night visions, which makes a total of eight visions in Zechariah 1-8.\textsuperscript{46} Yet, this theory is not universally accepted.\textsuperscript{47} The Semitic number of perfection is seven, and therefore the night vision sequence would be viewed as complete without the addition of Zech 3:1-7. Yet, numerology is not the only reason to argue against the original inclusion of Zech 3:1-7 in the vision sequence; there


\textsuperscript{44} Paul L. Redditt, \textit{Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi} (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 37.

\textsuperscript{45} For a detailed discussion of Mede’s claims of Jeremiah’s authorship of chapters 9-11, see Ralph L. Smith, \textit{Micah-Malachi} (Word Biblical Commentaries 32; Waco: Word, 1984), 170.


are significant differences between this vision and the other seven. Notably the *angelus interpres* is absent from the vision in Zechariah 3, which sets it apart from the other visions (1:9, 19; 2:3; 4:5; 5:5; 6:4; in 1:2 Yahweh fills this role). In addition, there is no request for interpretation, as Zechariah appears to understand what he has witnessed; granted, this request is also missing from the vision in 5:1-4, but that vision is still interpreted. A second difference occurs in the introductory formula. This vision begins with “then he showed me” rather than the typical “and I looked up and saw.” This difference extends to the verbal form of the root ראה* used, as it appears in the Hiphil in Zechariah 3 and in the Qal in the other introductory formula. Zechariah 3 also omits the emphatic הנה. Tollington points out that this would not be the only break in the introductory formula, as 1:8, 4:1, and 5:5 use the imperative towards the prophet while the other four visions have the statement uttered by the prophet. The vision in 2:5-9 also differs from the other seven visions in that it has less symbolism and fewer

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48 This terminology is used because it is the way this character is usually referred to when talking about Zechariah. This is legitimate because the character is actually called a מלאך in the text. This is in contrast to the character I refer to as the interpreting persona in Daniel 7 because the type of divine being is not identified in the text of Daniel (see pages 124-25). In addition, the difference in the way I have titled these characters recognizes that this character in Zechariah has an official interpretive function, and the character in Daniel is an interpreter by circumstance.


50 Cf. 1:8, 18; 2:1; 4:2; 5:1; 6:1 with 3:1.

51 One view is that this is merely a stylistic variant; see Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 113. For a good summary of the different positions, see N. L. A. Tidwell, ”*wā'omar* (Zech 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah's Fourth Vision,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975), 344.

characters but still resembles the other visions more than Zech 3:1-10. Regardless of its originality, it is similar to the vision in 4:1-14 and these visions often get treated together. With the inclusion of Zech 3:1-10, the vision cycle forms a chiastic structure and therefore demonstrates that the placement of this vision was done intentionally by the final redactor. This is because the central position in a chiastic structure emphasizes its importance and literally central role in the overarching structure. Thus it would have to be seen as a focal point to the overall narrative and not a later addition to Zechariah 1-8. Finally, there are no manuscript witnesses that do not include this vision.

The dates given in Zechariah 1 and 7 should form part of the discussion regarding the dating of chapters 1-8. Zech 1:1 states, “In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berekiah.” This would “be sometime between the end of October and the end of November 520 BCE.” Verse 7 claims that the night vision took place on “the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month in the second year of the Persian king Darius Hystaspes.” This would mean Zechariah saw his vision on February 15, 519 BCE. Translating the date in Zechariah 7:1 would mean that on December 7, 518 BCE, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah.

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54 Tidwell, "wāʾōmar," 346.


56 Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 61; Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, 169. Stuhlmueller dates it as October 27, 520 BCE: Carroll Stuhlmueller, *Rebuilding with Hope: A Commentary on the Book of Haggai and Zechariah* (International Theological Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 51. However, since no day is mentioned in the text itself, such a precise date is unsustainable.


58 Ibid.
It would be logical to assume that these dates would pre-date the writing of the text, but it is unclear how long after the prophecies were written. These dates lead Redditt to conclude that Zechariah 1-8 came to its final form along with the Temple, between November 518 BCE and April 516 BCE.\(^{59}\)

While dated closely to the previous two texts (1 Kings 22 and Job 1-2) a different picture emerges from Zechariah in relation to monotheism. Once again the presence of multiple divine beings negates the possibility of monotheism. Yahweh rebuking הֶשְׁתַּן might lead one to conclude that liberal monolatry is the best way to describe this passage, just like Job 1-2, since it demonstrates the power and authority of Yahweh over a member of the council. On the other hand, יְהוֹ הַמָּלַךְ acts independently and does not appear to have limitations set by Yahweh, which may lead the interpreter to say that this is polytheism rather than monolatry. Yet, this would probably be pushing the definition too far, as יְהוֹ הַמָּלַךְ ’s commissioning of Joshua is said to be a message from “Yahweh of Hosts.” Since the words of יְהוֹ הַמָּלַךְ belong to Yahweh, it is reasonable to see this character as being under the authority of Yahweh. Thus this passage represents a loose form of monolatry.

**Daniel 7**

There are four main theories about the book of Daniel’s composition.\(^{60}\) The first theory is that there was only one author of the book, and this person chose to write in both Hebrew and Aramaic. Three arguments have been put forward in favour of this position: 1) The Aramaic sections tend to focus on Babylon while the Hebrew has a

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\(^{59}\) Redditt, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 42.

\(^{60}\) For a good summary of these theories, see John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 12-13.
specifically Israelite perspective; 2) The audience for the Hebrew material differed from the less educated audience of the Aramaic portion; and 3) The language switch in chapter 2 was used to report the speech of the Chaldeans and then the author just chose to continue in Aramaic for the sake of convenience. The second theory is that the book was originally written in Hebrew and was quickly translated into Aramaic and that the present version was created when a piece of the original Hebrew manuscript was lost and the translation was used to fill in the gaps. The third theory, originally voiced by Ginsberg, reverses the languages of writing to an Aramaic original and a Hebrew translation. The Aramaic original could have been an actual written document or the translation issues could derive from the author’s internal monologue being in Aramaic, as it was the author’s primary language. The final theory is that an editor combined separate sources into one text. This theory dates back to the seventeenth century, as expressed by Spinoza, and states that an older Aramaic source was added into a new Hebrew composition. Either the third or fourth theory is best as these are based on textual arguments rather than speculation or tenuous connections.

There are two challenges to the traditional theory that a historical Daniel wrote the whole book. The first is the authenticity of the predictions, and the second is the literary

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63 W. Sibley Towner, Daniel (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1984), 5-6.

relationship between chapters 1-6 and 7-12.\textsuperscript{65} Collins states that,

the referential aspects of the book suggest that chps. 7-12 belong together in the Maccabean period since all are dominated by the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. By contrast, chps. 1-6 contain no certain allusions to that time. While some episodes in chps. 1-6 could be read as allegories for the persecution, the overall portrayal of the Gentile kings is scarcely compatible with the persecutor of chps. 7-12.\textsuperscript{66}

Whether the two halves of the book originally belonged together or were later combined in a sophisticated and thorough manner, Chapter 7 serves as the linchpin for both sections and is integral to both halves.\textsuperscript{67} Collins says, “The retention of Daniel 7 in Aramaic serves as an interlocking device between the two halves of the book. Chapter 7 belongs with the visions by genre, subject matter, and fictional dating (since it begins a new sequence of Babylon-Media-Persia). It is linked to the tales by language and by the obvious parallelism with the four-kingdom prophecy of ch. 2.”\textsuperscript{68}

This final Aramaic chapter is typically dated between 169-164 BCE due to its allusion to Antiochus IV.\textsuperscript{69} Daniel 1:1 dates the book to the reigns of Jehoiakim of Judah and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. However, this date has long been challenged, as early as Porphyry in the third century CE.\textsuperscript{70} While the book claims that these visions were

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{65} Collins, \textit{Daniel} (1993), 25.
\item\textsuperscript{66} John J. Collins, \textit{Daniel, with an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature} (The Forms of the Old Testament Literature XX; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 30.
\item\textsuperscript{67} LaCocque, \textit{Daniel in His Time}, 3.
\item\textsuperscript{68} Collins, \textit{Daniel} (1993), 30.
\item\textsuperscript{69} Ibid; LaCocque, \textit{Daniel in His Time}, 3; Sharon Pace, \textit{Daniel} (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary 17; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 8; Paul L. Redditt, \textit{Daniel} (The New Century Bible Commentary; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 116.
\item\textsuperscript{70} While Porphyry’s work is no longer available directly, it is known from quotations found in Jerome’s commentary on Daniel. This particular issue is discussed in Jerome’s prologue. For further details see P. M. Casey, "Porphyry and the Book of Daniel," \textit{Journal of Theological Studies} 27 (1976), 15-33.
\end{itemize}
given to Daniel during the exilic period, the content of the visions should be interpreted as apocalyptic code referring to the deeds of Antiochus IV and his persecution and defilement of Jewish life. Pace says, “While not historical, this technique casts the author’s reflections about the sufferings of the community’s present in light of the wisdom of the past.”\(^\text{71}\) Pace’s claim is that this was done to provide the audience with hope. By casting the visions into the past, a past that Israel survived, the audience would gain hope that it will survive its current situation.\(^\text{72}\) Also, by layering the critique of the present in the past, it protects the author from retribution by those who are criticized. This cloaking of the present in the past could even relate to the book’s attribution to the legendary figure of Danel, who originally appears as a wise king in the Ugaritic literature and then in Ezekiel 14:14, 20; 28:3 and in the Second Temple book of 1 Enoch (as Daniel in 6-7; 69:2).\(^\text{73}\)

While obviously the most recent of the Council of Yahweh texts, it is the hardest text to interpret in relationship to the concept of monotheism. The reason for this is that the passage is steeped in ancient mythology, and it is complicated to separate the theology of the writer(s) of Daniel from the original theology of the symbols, as explored in the previous exegesis of this passage.\(^\text{74}\) Despite this, several observations can be made. When the judgment is to take place, “thrones” are set up, which demonstrates that multiple deities are present and comprise the court (v. 10), and thus this is not a

\(^\text{71}\) Pace, *Daniel*, 9.

\(^\text{72}\) Ibid., 9-10.

\(^\text{73}\) LaCocque, *Daniel in His Time*, 5.

\(^\text{74}\) See Chapter Three, pages 92-93 and Chapter Four, pages 97-99.
monotheistic text. However, the only named being is “the Ancient of Days,” whose identity was revealed to be Yahweh by my exegesis in Chapter Two. In addition, when the “One like a Son of Man” appears, he is presented before Yahweh; the setting implies the court is still in session, but again the focus is solely on “the Ancient of Days.” The presentation itself demonstrates that the one presented is subordinate to the one to whom he is presented. This passage, therefore, reflects something close to radical monotheism and is most similar to the theology found in Isaiah 6.

Having completed an analysis of the dating of the Council of Yahweh texts, it is important to address the theory of monotheistic evolution. In relation to the Council of Yahweh texts, there is no linear progression with regards to the monolatry presented in each text. In fact, the earliest (Isaiah 6) and most recent (Daniel 7) show the most advanced forms of monolatry, and the middle three (1 Kings, Job 1-2, Zechariah 3) show a very similar perspective to each other, which might be due to the close proximity of their dates of composition. Yet, one further area must be explored in relationship to monolatry and the Council of Yahweh: the role of human beings within the council.

**Human Beings and the Council of Yahweh**

Definitional logic suggests that the divine council consists of gods, and humans, by nature, cannot be members of the council. However, Jer 23:16-22 challenges this assumption. In this passage, the term סד appears twice in reference to the Council of Yahweh. On behalf of the Lord of Hosts, the prophet is speaking against “psuedo-
prophets”, in this case ones who are speaking of peace. In verse 18 he says to the people that the prophets have not stood in the council of Yahweh and therefore, have not heard his words. Then in verse 22, the text says that if they had been in God’s council, they would have been proclaiming his words. This juxtaposition between false and true prophecy revolves around the Council of Yahweh. It is explicit that true prophets must have access to the Council of Yahweh in order to convey the words of the Lord (cf. Jer 28:20; 15:19). Fretheim says,

The council demonstrates that God is not in heaven alone, but that a complex sociality is basic to the divine life. In other words, relationship is integral to the identity of God, independent of God’s relationship to the world. In some sense the prophet was invited to participate in this relationship. The boundary between human and divine communities is not seen to be fixed or impenetrable. The human is caught up into the divine life and together they become involved in the becoming of the world. In so doing the prophet retains his individuality, and his humanness is not compromised. Yet, the prophet, in leaving the council table with a word to speak, becomes the embodiment of the word of God in the world. The prophet is the vehicle for divine immanence.

Since the prophets are human beings, this passage, at the very least, grants access to non-deities and most likely membership.

Another possible response to developing monotheism is that the Council of Yahweh underwent a shift from membership consisting entirely of gods to one that allowed various humans, based on the position the human holds (e.g., prophet, high

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75 It is important to mention here that the MT does not use the term pseudo-prophets, which is derived from the LXX. I use it in order to distinguish between the two groups under discussion and because legitimacy is Jeremiah’s concern in this passage.


77 Terence E. Fretheim, Jeremiah (Smyth and Helwys Bible Commentary 15; Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2002), 336.
priest) to take up roles on behalf of the council. As explored in Chapter One, the traditional interpretation is that the divine councils comprise all the deities and only the deities. If this interpretation is to hold, then when human beings are depicted in the Council of Yahweh scenes they must only be there in order to view the proceedings of the council and yet not participate. This interpretation would fit 1 Kings 22, for example, as Micaiah is said to witness the scene in Heaven, but does not participate in it nor act as its agent.

A similar argument could be made for Zechariah 3. Certainly, Zechariah, like Micaiah ben Imlah, is allowed to witness the council scene, but does not participate in it. Also, Joshua the High Priest is present in the council as the defendant in his own trial (v. 1). Again, a human being has access to the council but does not act nor speak. He is acted upon. He is spoken to. Yet, this case is not closed. Joshua is commissioned in this text to “judge [Yahweh’s] house” and to “keep [his] courts,” and in verse 7 the Lord extends a covenant to Joshua, which includes access to the council (“... and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here”). Therefore, this is not a clear case of an outside observer being granted a viewing permit to the actions of the council. Not

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78 This is Gordon’s argument when he states, “The metamorphosis of the DC within the Old Testament opens the way for the ‘humanizing’ of the concept, in the sense that an enhanced role for human participants in relation to the council becomes possible”: Robert P. Gordon, "Standing in the Council: When Prophets Encounter God," in The God of Israel (ed. Robert P. Gordon, University of Cambridge Oriental Press Publications 64; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 201. However, Gordon’s understanding of the divine council is much broader than the one used in this study, and while he recognizes that human contact with the council does not occur in a linear way he does not appear to find this important. In addition, like those before him, he only sees it in relation to prophets and ignores the role of Joshua.

79 As noted in Chapter Two there are also certain times when the phrase “sons of god” is used that interpreters believe it refers to human rather than divine beings (see page 45). Recently Fockner has suggested that this term can mean either a group of humans or a group of divine beings and that the passages that use this term need to be explored further to determine which group is intended. See Sven Fockner, "Reopening the Discussion: Another Contextual Look at the Sons of God," Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 32 (2008), 449-50.
only is he granted standing rights, his commission (usually understood as the ability to rule over the temple, though this is not explicit) contains reference to judging, the job of the council. It seems as if Joshua is commissioned to do the work of the council on Earth and allowed to be present for council meetings in Heaven. Now one could argue that “access” means nothing more than viewing rights and that this does reflect a theological shift, but merely a transfer of roles one from prophet (the usual observers of the council according to Jeremiah 23) to priest. Yet, the connection with other council members implies a closer relationship than that of an observer: in Job the members of the council are referred to as the ones standing before Yahweh, so if Joshua is to join “those standing here” then the implication is that he is going to become more than a messenger of the council.

The traditional interpretation faces further challenge when one examines the text of Isaiah 6. This text contains elements of the two already mentioned, which is important since it predates both of the aforementioned texts. Here, Isaiah is in the council standing before the Lord’s throne, just like Joshua was (and the council members in Job), but contrary to the passage in Zechariah, Isaiah claims that he is impure and should not be in this place and, therefore, receives his cleansing. Unlike Joshua, Isaiah speaks in the council, and he does so on his own initiative. This is a contrast to Joshua, whose impurity is brought forward by יהוה מלאך. 1 Kings 22 also has elements that are paralleled in Isaiah, but the parallel is not between Isaiah and Micaiah, but between Isaiah and רוח. In both texts Yahweh asks for a volunteer to send on an earthly mission, and in 1 Kings 22 רוח, a member of the council, steps forward to volunteer, and in Isaiah 6 it is Isaiah the human being who steps forward and volunteers. Despite this striking
parallel, there is a major difference between the two characters. In 1 Kings 22, רוח is not only volunteers for the mission, but also engages in the discussion regarding the fate of the King of Israel. When engaging in the discussion, רוח is acting as a full member, but when taking part in the earthly mission, רוח is acting as the agent of the council. Thus the parallel would make Isaiah an agent of the council. However, this role is slightly more complicated than simple agenthood. A parallel is found in the King Keret epic, when El needs someone to go and heal Keret. The council members are first asked to volunteer for the mission, and when none do, another being, Shataqatu, is created for the mission (CAT 1.14 V. 10-VI. 3). This character is an agent of the council rather than a member, but this character is also not asked to volunteer nor is it present when the request is made. This parallel demonstrates that one does not have to be a member to be an agent of the council. Yet, Isaiah does play a larger role than Shataqatu, as he is able to volunteer for his mission. One might argue that what happens in Isaiah 6 is not even a council scene because there is no discussion in the text. However, the nature of Isaiah’s mission demonstrates that judgment has taken place, and God does not ask Isaiah directly (or instruct as one might expect) but rather requests a volunteer, which suggests that there are others present who would be able to volunteer. Therefore, Isaiah does not participate in the council as an officer but at the level of an active agent.

Prophetic access to the council is in itself an innovation of Israelite religion. Yet, the various approaches of the Israelite theologians demonstrate varying degrees of comfort and reflection regarding the boundary between humans and gods within the structure of the Council of Yahweh. Certainly, some of the prophetic writers are comfortable with the concept of humans (a select, divinely chosen few) being able to
observe the council (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Zechariah). This concept is also found in the historical work of the Deuteronomistic Historian and the apocalyptic book of Daniel. Yet, each author has a unique interpretation of how this works and how much freedom the humans have within the council. Also, it is clear that there is not a linear progression within the theological understanding.

Isaiah might be the earliest of the Council of Yahweh texts, and yet that narrative is the most developed as far as human participation within the proceedings of the council. Because Jer 23:18, 22 and Amos 3:7 do not actually contain a council scene, but only references to prophetic access to witness the council, it is hard to determine how they understood the relationship between a prophet and the council. Yet, the close relationship between Jeremiah and the Deuteronomistic History might suggest that the scene in 1 Kings 22 reflects Jeremiah’s understanding as well as the Deuteronomist. In this scene, the human beings are significantly less active within the council than the prophet in Isaiah 6. Here the prophet is only allowed to witness and report on the council, not speak or act within it. Even more limiting is the access given to the other 400 prophets, who do not even get to witness the council, but rather have an emissary of the council sent to them with the verdict, false though it might be. Zechariah also seems

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80 Including Amos 3:7 here is based on understanding the Hebrew סוד as translated by “council” rather than “secret”; Simon B. Parker, "Council," in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Pieter W. van der Horst and Bob Becking; 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 204-07, esp. 07. In addition, Amos 3:7 interrupts the flow of the question sequence in verses 3-6 that is picked up again in verse 8; this could indicate that verse 7 is a later editorial addition.


82 One might claim that these were false prophets and that is why they were not permitted access to the council. Yet, this is not a good understanding as the prophets are communicating a legitimate word
to have the same view of prophetic access as the Deuteronomist in that Zechariah himself is only allowed to observe the council in Zechariah 3. Joshua, on the other hand, is given access to the council, and this is clearly a theological innovation as he is the High Priest and not a prophet. Also, much of his experience in the council is more reminiscent of Isaiah than of Micaiah; however, he does not have as much freedom within the council as Isaiah does because he does not speak.

Daniel, on the other hand, reverts to the deuteronomistic view of humans as observers of the council. Yet there is still an innovation here when Daniel is able to ask a member of the council to explain its proceedings.\(^{83}\) This may seem like an insignificant addition, but it is a step backward as far as human membership within the council. Prior to this, there was no evidence that the human witnesses/participants had any confusion in understanding the events of the council. However, now the human is unable to interpret on his own and needs to turn to divine assistance.\(^{84}\) While the path is not exactly linear and while human access is not completely revoked at the close of the Hebrew Bible, it does seem that Israelite, and later Jewish, theologians entertained the idea of human membership within the Council of Yahweh (perhaps as a means of moving towards monotheism), but ultimately, began to reject this concept and resurrected the boundaries between Heaven and Earth.

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\(^{83}\) Of course the concept of a divine interpreter first appears in the book of Zechariah; however, the book of Daniel is the first to place this lack of understanding within the council itself.

\(^{84}\) One would be amiss not to notice that there is also a genre change between the earlier prophetic literature and the apocalyptic literature of Daniel. Mediation is part of apocalyptic literature according to Collin’s definition: John J. Collins, "Towards the Morphology of a Genre: Introduction," *Semeia* 14 (1979), 9. However, there is no reason to assume that the genre shift does not reflect a theological shift as well.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This investigation began by questioning whether the assumptions in divine council research were founded or not. Of the assumptions questioned two of the most fundamental are that the divine council is completely divine and that there is only one council present in the Hebrew Bible. After tracing the scholarship to date, I determined there was no standard criteria used to determine which texts contain a divine council. Taking the title “divine council” seriously, I proposed four criteria that can be used universally to identify a divine council and one additional one for determining a Council of Yahweh text in particular. The first four are: 1) Multiple deities are present; 2) It is located in Heaven; 3) Someone or something is judged; and 4) Some discussion takes place. The fifth criterion relates specifically to a Council of Yahweh text, namely, Yahweh needs to be named as the leader in the text.

Using the criterion of multiple deities as a starting point, I examined the texts where multiple deities appear. In doing this, I eliminated texts that did not meet the other criteria and discovered that not all divine councils in the biblical texts are Council of Yahweh texts (e.g., Psalm 82, Deuteronomy 32). From this investigation a small corpus of Council of Yahweh texts emerge: Isaiah 6; 1 Kings 22; Job 1-2; Zechariah 3; Daniel 7.

These texts were then explored in order to determine which characters could be considered council members. Again, I identified a small cast of characters: Yahweh, One like a Son of Man, Isaiah, and Joshua. Additional characters were also noted as peripheral to the council but who do not have membership
status.

From this collection, I developed a structural understanding of the Council of Yahweh as it appears in the Hebrew Bible:

Other categories relate to the council but are not categories of membership, notably observers (e.g., Micaiah ben Imlah, Zechariah, Daniel, Thousands upon Thousands), vehicles (e.g., 400 prophets), and defendants (e.g., the Beasts).

In recognition that the Hebrew Bible is neither univocal nor systematic, the next stage of this research focused on a historical investigation, particularly in reference to the relationship between the Council of Yahweh and monotheism. I discovered that the theory regarding the development from polytheism to monolatry to monotheism does not follow in the Council of Yahweh texts, which reflect a form of monolatry. The most radical form is found in the earliest text, Isaiah 6, and the most liberal are found in later texts, 1 Kings 22, Job 1-2, and Zechariah 3. However, one cannot hypothesize a linear process away from radical monolatry as the latest text, Daniel 7, returns to a form similar
to that found in Isaiah 6. Thus if the texts are plotted on a liberal to radical continuum, one would begin with 1 Kings to Job 1-2 to Zechariah 3 to Daniel 7, and finish with Isaiah 6. This represents an ongoing debate rather than a linear revelation.

**Implications**

The Council of Yahweh shares features with the ancient Near Eastern cultures that surrounded the nation of Israel, but it also demonstrates a theological reflection of the journey in Israelite religion towards monotheism. Each of the three conclusions of this study has its own implications. The first conclusion is that there is more than one council presented within the Hebrew Bible; I argued that another divine council appears in Deut 32:8 (based on the variant readings at Qumran and in the LXX) and in Psalm 82. This opens up the possibility that these divine council texts could refer to the divine council of other nations and, therefore, provide a foundation for comparative work in a different way than the Council of Yahweh passages. It also provides a point of comparison internal to the Hebrew Bible. This can make textual analysis more complicated, but it can also provide insight into internal and external theological understandings.

The second conclusion argues that council imagery and settings negate the claim of radical monotheism asserted for post-2nd Isaiah texts. Wildberger says, “There are also other places in the OT which refer to the motif of the assembly of the gods or, as the case may be, the heavenly council. This presumes a polytheism, with a king of the gods ruling as head of the pantheon.”¹ As noted earlier, questioning the monotheism of the

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Hebrew Bible is not a unique or new position but questioning it through a sustained analysis of the divine council has not been completed, despite the work of Smith and Heiser who have already raised this issue.\textsuperscript{2} This conclusion would mean that the presence of the council indicates that those texts represent at the most radical monolatry. This has implications for the development towards monotheism, such as a non-linear, non-universal development.

The final conclusion is that in some strands of the tradition, human beings are included in the membership of the council on the lowest tier in the structure. This conclusion has the most striking implication of all. Because this is unique in the ancient Near East, it demonstrates an element of the religion that is an Israelite innovation.\textsuperscript{3} It is an innovation that is likely due to theological reflection on the universal truth of a divine council and an emergent monotheism, though as already seen not in a linear progression. It is one solution to the relational nature of the deity and the need to depopulate the gods.

**Areas for Further Research**

While this study does not engage in comparative work itself, it has implications for the future of comparative studies on the topic of the divine council. It represents the platform from which the comparative dialogue can take place. This means that the Israelite concept does not need to take a secondary role to the understanding of the


\textsuperscript{3} This is not to say that there might be seeds of human membership within the realm of the divine in other cultures, such as some of the theories around the Rephaim in Ugarit or even the link between kingship and deification in Egypt, but the idea of humans as participating members within a divine council is not an explicit concern.
concept in other cultures. A future study should be completed to compare these results to those from Ugarit, Mesopotamia, and Deir ʿAlla to name a few. It would also provide the basis for further comparative work within the Hebrew Bible itself, as it could be used to explore the action of divine beings outside the Council of Yahweh. This type of further study can provide insight into questions such as: Do council members have different functions beyond their council roles? Or are they always acting as members of the council? And are all deities members of the council?

Thus there are various ways in which this study can be followed up and questions that arise out of this primary study. The largest area left for further research is in the area of deities outside of the Divine Council texts. This is true of council members who appear in non-council texts, and it is also true of deities who appear in the text, outside of council texts, and/or in the remains of material culture. Examples of deities that have been excluded from this study, but should be considered in a more extensive look at Divine Council membership, are Plague and Pestilence (Hab 3:5). These characters function in ways (e.g., connected with Yahweh and his judgment) that would be compatible with the members of the divine council, but there is no undisputable evidence that these deities are members. Criteria need to be devised and consistently applied to determine whether excluded deities could actually be considered included.

The relationship between female deities and the Council of Yahweh is a case where one has to distinguish between the textual presentation of the council and what has appeared in folk-religion or in earlier expressions of the council. There is sound

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4 It has been standard procedure to view the actions of the character inside and outside of the council as *sympatico*. For an example, see E. Theodore Mullen, *The Assembly of the Gods: The Divine Council in Canaanite and Early Hebrew Literature* (Harvard Semitic Monographs 24; Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 198-200. Yet, this assumption is not necessarily a good one.
archaeological evidence for both Asherah and Anat being Yahweh’s consort.\(^5\) However, there is little textual data for Asherah and none for Anat to suggest this role, and neither are present in any biblical council texts.\(^6\) The distinction between folk religion and textual theology may be an artificial one, but it is also an important one. This is particularly true should one wish to do comparative work or developmental work rather than systematic studies. It is for this reason that this study concludes that according to the Hebrew Bible there are no goddesses present in the Council of Yahweh. One could argue that there may have been female members of the collectives that comprise the council and there is no evidence to the contrary. This is true since a masculine plural would normally be used to represent a mixed gendered group, and therefore, the collectives found in the council could be male, female, or androgynous. However, there is also no evidence other than the grammatical gender to suggest gender, and since ascribing actual gender based on grammatical gender can lead to notorious conclusions,


\(^6\) A possible exception to this may be found in 1 Kings 22, as the 400 prophets, whose second-hand prophecy is a lie, could be viewed as the 400 prophets of Asherah whose fate is unknown after the battle at Mount Carmel. This would explain why Jehoshaphat requests Micaiah ben Imlah, who is the only prophet in the scene to witness the Council of Yahweh. Yet, this text could be used to argue against the idea that Asherah is a legitimate member of the council as her prophets are not permitted access to it, but that a prophet of Yahweh is needed in order to view the council’s decision. Also, the King of Israel responds to Jehoshaphat’s question (אומר מהבש עשו את 이것은 לי יהוה נביא פה אין יהושפט ויאמר, ידוע לי מהואש וההוא יהוה נביא פה) by saying there is still a prophet of Yahweh, which might imply that these ones are not actually Yahweh’s prophets. See Jerome T. Walsh, *1 Kings* (Berit Olam; Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996), 345-46.
especially in the case of a title, I did not use gender as one of the categories of observation.

One might find images of the Divine Feminine in the text of the Hebrew Bible (Proverbs 1-9) and especially within the Catholic canon of the Old Testament (Ben Sira 7, 14-15, 24; Wisdom of Solomon 6-7), namely the personification of Wisdom/Sophia. This character is unique and interesting but also contains parallels to יהוה מלאך. She is considered part of and yet separate from Yahweh, like יהוה מלאך. While she is not best understood as a hypostasis, due in part to her complexity, she is said to do things that have elsewhere been attributed to Yahweh. For example, she is also said to have been present at creation (Prov 8:27-30; Wis 7:22; 8:1, 4, 8; 9:9). In a different approach to Wisdom, various studies have attempted to identify Wisdom/Sophia with one of the ancient Near Eastern goddess, such as Inanna, Astarte, and Persian Provenance, and all have had some degree of success. Yet, the universal success actually results in universal failure. Murphy responds to this:

Can anything of theological significance be made of such a chameleon-like figure? As indicated at the outset, little is to be gained by a classification of hypostasis or the like, or even of an analysis of the foreign influences that have contributed to her characterization. This historical approach to the wisdom texts is enlightening, but it is ‘soft’ on meaning. Personified Wisdom was understood by those who wrote about her and honoured her, not as a rival to the Lord, or even as a sympathetic goddess. This research fails to do justice to Wisdom herself, and to the place of

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7 On the idea of Wisdom as a hypostasis, see, Othmar Keel, Die Weisheit spielt vor Gott. Ein ikonographischer Beitrag zur Deutung der mššālāqāṯ in Sprüche 8,30f (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 12-13. For more on the complex relationship between Yahweh and מלאך see Chapter Four, pages 118-21.

wisdom in the Bible.⁹

Because of the apparent similarities among all these female figures the connection is not nearly as striking. For example, if there were clear parallels between Isis and not between any other goddess then it would indicate a symbiotic relationship between the two. Yet, because there are so many possible parallels it seems more likely that it relates to what a women could or could not be in the ancient Near East. In other words, the parallels would exist because all the figures are women. Even though they are goddesses, there may be an element of social role relating to gender that is coming into play.

It also seems that Murphy’s assessment has merit because it seeks to take the text seriously within its own context. While ancient Near Eastern parallels can be helpful in developing the total picture of the textual context, it should not be the lens through which the text is viewed. It may seem like a semantic argument to say that one should examine the text and then look at the ancient Near Eastern world for help, rather than look at the ancient Near Eastern world and then apply these concepts to the text, but it is actually vital if one wants to understand the textual intent. If, for example, one believes that Wisdom is developed from Asherah, the temptation would be to find the characteristics of Asherah within Wisdom. This could lead to interpreters ignoring aspects of Wisdom that are foreign to Asherah, while highlighting minor similarities in a way that gives them a disproportionate level of emphasis. Therefore, it is important to start with a textual analysis of biblical texts before looking at potential parallels in the ancient Near East.

Therefore, if all goddesses share elements in common with Wisdom/Sophia then she is

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unlikely to be an expression of any of them. However, it is possible that she is the representative of all divine females, just as Yahweh becomes the representative of all male deities. As monotheism developed, Wisdom/Sophia became the representative of all female deities. The association of Wisdom/Sophia is also due to the emergence of radical monotheism.

The results of this study are not limited to insights into Israel alone. The benefits for comparative understandings with the divine councils throughout the ancient Near East is not unilateral. One way in which this study could be helpful for studies on the divine council of other nations is assistance in the development of criteria for determining council passages and for determining who is and who is not a member. It could also provide further insight into the structure of those other councils. For example, in using this study itself as a comparative point one could re-examine the four-tier structure proposed for Ugarit. It may be better to understand tier three as a division within tier two since the tier terminology suggests hierarchy, and there is no indication that the tier two gods are superior to Kothar wa-Hasis, but often they are shown to be in need of him.

Following this line of thought, with such a populated second tier it might be useful to examine the actions and functions of the gods on that tier to determine if there is a more detailed structure (divisions, subtiers, etc.) present on this tier. The plethora of material available from Ugarit would make this a rich avenue for further exploration.
Appendix A: Monotheism and bēnê (hā)ʾělōhîm

Nickelsburg highlights one of the biggest interpretive problems with an Israelite divine council, namely that it causes concern for those who ascribe to a monotheistic worldview: not only does a divine council limit the uniqueness of Yahweh, but it also suggests that other gods are possible in relation to Yahweh. Smith comments on this problem,

At first glance, Israelite monotheism would seem theoretically to stand at odds with the imagery of Israelite assembly with its multiplicity of divinities, even if they are minor or subservient to Yahweh as their absolute king. In fact, the divine assembly is not oppositional to monotheistic statements in biblical literature. For example, it is commonly held by biblical scholars that the opening of “Second Isaiah” involves a divine council scene, yet this chapter is part of a larger work that contains the greatest number of monotheistic statements in the Bible. Divine council language and scenes also appear in the ‘priestly work’ of the Pentateuch and the post-exilic books (Zechariah and Daniel), which assumedly are monotheistic. In other words, monotheism requires that one divine assembly headed by one divine ruler, but it makes little or no impact on the language of assembly itself. Moreover, as noted, it probably reduced and modified the sense of divinity attached to ‘angels.’

Smith is correct in demonstrating that monotheistic beliefs appear side by side with the presentation of the divine council. It seems that perhaps the importance of monotheism in relation to the divine council is not the denial of other divine beings, but that Yahweh be held in complete and absolute control of the cosmos. If Yahweh has complete power then whether the other beings are divine or not, they are servants of Yahweh and therefore, unworthy of worship. This is important for understanding that the role of the šāṭān is to serve Yahweh, not to be a rival deity or threat to the High God.

124 Nickelsburg, “Sons of (the) God(s),” 794-795.
Not all scholars agree with Smith’s assessment. A popular understanding is that held by Crook, who says,

The Lord is in session with the heavenly council, whose members are called ‘sons of God.’ The words are not to be taken literally: in other religions in the ancient world these beings would be gods; here they are angels, agents of God, who do His bidding. They may not carry out judgments upon mankind without His permission. God here is unmatched and supreme.\textsuperscript{126}

It is important to note that interpreting these divine beings as angels is problematic because of the theological implication the term angel has developed.\textsuperscript{127} As early as the New Testament period it had become theologically correct to regard these beings as angels, which are defined as “a lesser order of heavenly beings at the one God’s beck and call. It was no longer necessary to assert God’s superiority over them or difference from them, for they no longer partook of divinity.”\textsuperscript{128} While this became the dominant theological concept, there is nothing intrinsic in the word, malʾāḵ which actually means messenger, which would suggest a less than divine being. Also, the messengers of the gods in other Ancient Near Eastern cultures were also seen as gods.\textsuperscript{129} Therefore, there is no reason to assume that those of the original textual context would have believed that the members of the divine council were beings that fit into an angelic definition, rather than merely a lower level of god.\textsuperscript{130}

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\textsuperscript{126} Margaret B. Crook, \textit{The Cruel God: Job’s Search for the Meaning of Suffering} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1959), 11.
\textsuperscript{127} Also the term is problematic because it reduces the bēnē (hā) ʾĕlōhîm to only containing malʾāḵîm, which is only one category of this group; others, such as the lying spirit, the šāšān, the Cherabim, the Seraphim, and McLaughlin even suggests prophets, were members of this group. Therefore, even if the term angels had not taken on a theological meaning that is in opposition to the text, it would not be representative of the entire Divine Council, see John L. McLaughlin, “Their Hearts Were Hardened: The Use of Isaiah 6, 9-10 in the Book of Isaiah,” \textit{Biblica} 75 (1994): 4.
\textsuperscript{128} Nickelsburg, “Sons of (the) God(s),” 798.
\textsuperscript{129} Smith, \textit{The Origins of Biblical Monotheism}, 50.
\textsuperscript{130} Because the term angel has become associated with a theological category, this paper will refrain from using it in favor of the term divine beings; however, most of the quotes from others use the word angel to refer to the same beings.
Ellen White, “The Purpose and Portrayal of the šātān in the Old Testament” (Th.M. thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2004), 40-42. This appendix is reproduced identically to how it appeared in the thesis, including the original footnote numbers. It also reproduces any spelling or stylistic errors. Factual errors are corrected in note b below.

In the Th.M. thesis Parker’s article was misattributed to Nickelsburg and thus all references in this appendix to Nickelsburg should be to Simon B. Parker, "Sons of (the) God(s)," in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Pieter W. van der Horst and Bob Becking; 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 794-95.
Appendix B: Exegesis of Job 1-2

The šāṭān appears more in the first two chapters of Job than in the rest of the Old Testament combined. Therefore, the interpretations of this passage are numerous and vary widely. On one hand, certain scholars, such as Morris, claim that although a fully developed satanic doctrine is not present, the roots of such a doctrine are and he argues that the šāṭān is evil and working against the best interest of humanity.110 However, others, such as Sheldon, are convinced that the šāṭān is an ambiguous character and the interpreter cannot tell if he is good or evil.111 Other theories have been put forward, such as that he is a literary device,112 the personification of Yahweh’s evil side,113 or is a neutral figure who is depicted as Yahweh’s faithful servant.114 Even though there is a plethora of interpretive issues when it comes to the character of the šāṭān in Job, when this analysis is finished it would seem that the final option is the best.

113 Russell, The Devil, 176.
114 Jung, Fallen Angels, 25.

a This appendix comes from Ellen White, “The Purpose and Portrayal of the šāṭān in the Old Testament (Th.M. thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2004), 37. This appendix is reproduced identically to how it appeared in the thesis, including the original footnote numbers. It also reproduces any spelling or stylistic errors.
Appendix C: Exegesis of Job 1-2 Continued

The prologue of Job is one of the longest sections in the Biblical text where the divine council is depicted. Twice the narrative says, “And on that day,” (1:6; 2:1) which may indicate that there was a particular day of meeting. Nickelsburg agrees, saying, “It is clear from these passages that the divine beings in general customarily came together at certain times to report to Yahweh.” Authors such as McLaughlin and Habel believe that the assembly of the gods took place on a specific day each year. Habel claims this day coincides with the festival in Job. He states, “The day of the heavenly council meeting was probably simultaneous with the annual festival in Job’s household. Job’s pious sacrifices, like those of Noah, had apparently attracted the attention of heaven.” Habel believes that it was probably the annual end-of-the-year harvest festival and McLaughlin thinks that it is likely the Babylonian New Year festival.

This would suggest that this was a regularly scheduled meeting designed for the council members to give their year-end reports. The repetition between the two pericopes also suggests that this is part of the council’s routine. Just because the šāṭān is singled out in the prose does not mean that he is the only one who made a report, but his report is the only one that bears on the poem to come. It is also unlikely that Job is the only person who is discussed by the šāṭān and Yahweh, regardless of whether the šāṭān is an intruder or not. If he is an intruder, he would still have to deal with his reason for barging into the

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131 Author’s translation.
132 Nickelsburg, “Sons of (the) God(s),” 798.
council. If he is not an intruder, one should assume that other beings would have attracted his attention in his year of roving.

Nickelsburg claims that the śāṭān demonstrates the abilities of the council members as far as how and when they are allowed to speak. Even though the śāṭān is allowed to speak freely to Yahweh and make proposals, the conversation is initiated by Yahweh and the Lord has to approve the proposal made. The śāṭān also serves to demonstrate the superiority of Yahweh and his authority (Job 1:12; 2:6; Zech 3:2). This interpretation is in direct contrast with those who view the śāṭān as an intruder in the heavenly council. These scholars do not deny that there was a heavenly court, but they do deny the śāṭān’s membership in that council. Hartley says,

Was the Satan one of the sons of God? The majority of scholars assume that he was. Driver-Gray understand the preposition among to indicate that he had a prominent place in the assembly. But some recent scholars understand the text to portray the Satan as an intruder. They come to this position either by taking the term also to mean ‘other than’ or by understanding the preposition among to indicate someone who is an outsider.135

This would cause other problems. For example, if the śāṭān is not a member of Yahweh’s court, how did he get there? In other words, how does someone with no authority to enter Yahweh’s court “intrude” on it? It seems to limit God’s ability to keep out the undesirable. If God cannot keep the śāṭān out of his throne room, how can he exercise authority over him on earth? Yet, from the passages where the śāṭān appears, it would seem certain that Yahweh can and does control the śāṭān.136 The similar reference in the second heavenly council pericope also sheds some light on this debate. The fact that the text says, “to take his position among them” (2:1), suggests that he is a member who has

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136 See Zech 3:2 and the restrictions within the text of Job (as demonstrated below).
a regular position in the council. Therefore, it is best to understand the sāṭān as a member of the divine council in this passage.

Literary Interpretations

A different approach is taken by scholars such as Birch, Brueggemann, Fretheim, and Petersen, who view the sāṭān as a literary device. They say, “The figure of satan is scarcely known elsewhere in the Old Testament, and is not to be taken here with anything more than dramatic force. That is, the character satan is a dramatic device in prose in a most poignant tone the way which lived experience disputes against settled religious conviction.” Parallels between Job and the sāṭān in the book suggest that the sāṭān’s role could be literary as opposed to theological. The parallels include the sāṭān “stretches out his hand,“(1:12; 2:5) to destroy the work of Job’s “hand” (1:10), which relates to the “hand” of God (1:11; 2:9). The sāṭān says that Job will curse God to “His face” (1:11; 2:5), while Job is concerned with his sons cursing God in their “hearts,” (1:5) and later desires to plead his case to Yahweh’s “face” (13:15). Yet, to claim that the sāṭān is only a literary device seems too simplistic and perhaps reflects a desire to demythologize.

The Initiative between God and the sāṭān

Whether the sāṭān takes initiative or not is an important question in the discussion about the role that the sāṭān plays in the prologue of Job. The discussion of it in commentaries and articles appear to revolve around the authors’ underlying beliefs about the sāṭān and their interpretations are dictated by those assumptions. For example, if one

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139 Birch et al., A Theological Introduction, 394.
140 Habel, The Book of Job, 91.
believes that the śāṭān is evil or somewhere in a process between neutral and evil, then s/he will point out that the initiative to test Job was proposed by the śāṭān. However, one piece of the narrative cannot be looked at in isolation from the other pieces.

To begin one’s analysis of the śāṭān with his response to the question about Job’s piety would do a disservice to both the text and the śāṭān. There is something significant in the passivity of the śāṭān in the opening verses of this scene. Some might argue that the śāṭān is anything but passive in this narrative; in fact he is depicted as inciting Yahweh to action against Job. This may be true, but this portrayal is secondary to the passive portrayal with which the reader begins. It is Yahweh who initiates the conversation (1:7). It is Yahweh who brings up the subject of Job into the conversation and then it is Yahweh who ultimately decides what action will be taken against Job and what limitations that action will have (1:8,12). Yahweh is depicted as being in control of the situation from start to finish. If anything, he is seen as manipulating the śāṭān through the conversation.

Some authors have noted the control of Yahweh throughout the pericope and suggested that Yahweh is using the śāṭān to express his own underlying questions about human piety. Janzen says, “We take the question to have the purpose not only of directing the Satan’s attention specifically to Job, but of sowing a seed in that investigative consciousness. This seed bears fruit as the Satan adopts the question form and brings Yahweh’s implicit query concerning Job to explicit articulation.”\textsuperscript{141} This understanding could support the literary understanding of the śāṭān. In other words, the character is just a tool of the text to move the story along and separate undesirable aspects

\textsuperscript{141} J. Gerald Janzen, \textit{Job} (Interpretation; Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 39.
of Yahweh from Yahweh himself. Or it could be similar to the difficulty in distinguishing between the Messenger of Yahweh and Yahweh. For in both cases there is a clear separation and yet, at other times the distinction is not so clear.\(^{142}\) In regards to the šātān, this can be seen in the parallel passages of 2 Sam. 24:1 and 1 Chron. 21:1, where in the first text the action to incite David was done by Yahweh and in the second attributed to šātān.\(^{143}\) This can also be seen in the Job text itself as the actions of the šātān are attributed to Yahweh (1:21; 2:10; 30:20-30; 31:35; 33:29; 40:2).\(^{144}\) Perhaps, ambiguity of identity is a characteristic of the divine beings who make up the divine council of Yahweh.

Wharton has suggested that because the šātān is the one who acts against Job, he is responsible for the action, not Yahweh:

The only clue to God’s possible reluctance about the proposed test comes in God’s response to hassatan in verse 12. … God here rejects hassatan’s proposal that God’s power should be used directly against Job. This test was proposed by hassatan, not God. It is to be by the hand of hassatan, not by God’s hand, that Job’s suffering is to be inflicted. God’s final word sets a protective limit beyond which hassatan’s assault on Job may\(^ t\) go.\(^{145}\)

This is an interesting spin on the conversation, yet it is problematic and hard to sustain. That God can put limits on the šātān suggests that the šātān’s power is, at the very least, subordinate to God’s. It also appears that the šātān is working for Yahweh and therefore, the šātān’s power comes from Yahweh. To borrow an analogy from the monarchy, when the monarch consents to a particular course of action, even though it is the bureaucracy


\(^{143}\) There is no definite article in this passage.

\(^{144}\) H. L. Ellison, A Study of Job: From Tragedy to Triumph (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 25.

who actually performs the action, it is still the power of the monarch being exercised. The bureaucracy does not have power, it has permission.

**Roving parallels**

According to Herodotus, during the Persian period royal spies were sent into foreign lands to produce intelligence.\(^{146}\) In theory, this intelligence could be both negative and positive; however, it was usually the negative which was reported.\(^{147}\) Tur-Sinai,\(^ {148}\) Martens,\(^ {149}\) and Pope\(^ {150}\) see the role of the ſāṭān in this passage as God’s royal spy. Habel says, “The Satan’s reply suggests that Yahweh was asking for the Satan to report on a particular role he was playing on Yahweh’s behalf. The verb ſwt,\(^ {b}\) ‘roving,’ immediately suggests a word play on ſāṭān, the title which the Satan bears.”\(^ {151}\) It would appear that the ſāṭān is fulfilling a very similar role to the Persian spies and may in fact, be modeled after them.

The parallels to the Persian spy are not the only ones associated with the ſāṭān and his vocational function. There are many parallels between the prologue of Job and the text of Proto-Zechariah (as will be seen in chapter three). According to Habel, “Clearly the ‘roving’ eyes of Yahweh (Zech 4:10), and his ‘patrolling’ angels (Zech 1:10-11), perform the same function as the Satan, namely, to range the earth, report back signs of disorder, and raise doubts about the integrity of leading citizens. The Satan, it seems, is more than an aimless angel rambling the earth; he has a specific role as Yahweh’s

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suspicious one, his spy." 152 Whether or not one agrees with this assessment, many believe that the šāṭān here is depicted as a servant of Yahweh.

It has long been noted that there is a paronomasia between hasšāṭān and the verb miššūṭ (1:7). This could be a simple literary technique that is well attested in Hebrew literature. However, there are scholars, such as Pope, 153 who believe that the title šāṭān was originally derived from this verb. Tur-Sinai makes a similar claim that šāṭān was originally written with a shin instead of a sin, which would give the term the meaning of the “one who goes to and fro.” 154 If either of these suggestions were true then it would give even more credibility to the idea that the šāṭān here fulfills a particular function of the divine council and is not a proper name, but a description of the role that the character plays.

Restrictions

Perhaps the most convincing evidence for understanding the šāṭān as a servant of Yahweh, who is under his control and without evil intent, is not only that permission must come from Yahweh in order to test Job’s piety, but that it is Yahweh himself who designs the parameters for that testing. Had the šāṭān stepped outside the parameters set by Yahweh then one might be able to make a strong case for the idea that the šāṭān in this passage was a rebellious character, but the šāṭān does not. Furthermore, even though he requests less restriction in the next episode, as noted above, this was not a conversation he initiated. Once again, it was Yahweh who wanted to know more details about the Job case (2:1-3). Jung claims that this passage is “clearly against any Satan vs. God

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152 Habel, The Book of Job, 1975, 89.
153 Pope, Job, 10.
theory.” The śāṭān is not pushing God into something, nor is he manipulating him or acting contrary to his will. Jung says, “Stress must be laid on the word ‘permitted.’ Job suffers because God (Job 1:12; 2:6) expressly consents to the trials he has to undergo. Satan never appears as acting on his own account; he acts in his capacity as God-appointed accuser and tempter. When he accuses without reason he is rebuked (Zech 3:1) and silenced.” Therefore, the claims of authors such as Langton and Habel that the śāṭān is developing an independence from Yahweh do not seem to have merit.

It is also important to note that the śāṭān does not attempt to convince Yahweh. At no point is he shown as debating the merits of what he has suggested or pushing his claim to get Yahweh to consent to the testing of Job. The śāṭān merely suggests that the piety of Job may not be deeper than an outward reflection and Yahweh immediately gives consent to have Job tested. This suggests that Yahweh did not see anything wrong with the śāṭān’s doubt or his questioning regarding Job. In fact, it appears to legitimize the śāṭān’s claim that this may truly be a possibility which requires further investigation.

**The Second Pericope (Job 2:1-7)**

**Blame passing**

Much has been made about Yahweh’s claim that the śāṭān incited him to test Job for no reason. While a lot of the analysis revolves around the character and abilities of God, some commentators see it as a condemnation of the śāṭān and evidence of his malicious nature. Yet this is not the best understanding. Habel says, “the catalyst which initiates the plot in the opening episodes is Yahweh’s boast about Job’s character. His

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provocative words lead to a conflict with the Satan. By a clever ironic twist, however, the narrator has Yahweh accusing the Satan of being the catalyst and inciting him to afflict Job for no reason." He goes on to add that regarding the šātān, “There is no necessary evil intent or malice in his comments or actions. Rather, he expresses the skepticism of any realist who understands human nature.” This demonstrates that Yahweh not the šātān, has tested Job without reason.

When God accuses the šātān of inciting him to strike out at Job without cause (2:3), Rowley sees this as a reprimand of his function. He says, “Satan’s function is to accuse, not to accuse falsely.” The idea here is that the šātān’s accusation does not bear fruit and therefore, it is false. Therefore, God’s statement is not about being incited or about Job’s innocence, but about the šātān’s job performance. If one takes into consideration the passage regarding the šātān in Zechariah 3 where Yahweh also rebukes the šātān for a false accusation then this may be the best possible interpretation for this statement.

**Skin for Skin**

Traditional interpretation paints a picture of the šātān as a slimy character who hisses through his teeth, “skin for skin.” It is this Gollum-like character that has created much of the interpretation of the šātān. However, there is no narration which suggests that this phrase was uttered through clenched teeth. The character interpretation would be

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161 This may lead to questions about the justice and power of God, but such questions are beyond the scope of this paper.
163 This view is rooted in traditional interpretation of the šātān being an evil character, as is reflected in the Miltonian devil.
different if the āṭān was depicted as saying the same phrase in a Woody Allen type voice or in the more serious tones of Dan Rather.

There is an almost universal understanding of this phrase among scholars to be idiomatic or proverbial, which probably had something to do with bartering or trading.\textsuperscript{164} The āṭān is not hissing for blood between clenched teeth, he is merely repeating a common proverb. In the same way that a parent might tell a child who is making a funny face that if they do not stop their face might stay that way, the āṭān is warning Yahweh with what was a typical wisdom statement or proverb of the time. Essentially what the āṭān is saying is that without allowing the body of Job to be touched the Lord is still protecting Job and therefore, Job is unlikely to waver from his piousness.

Habel claims that the āṭān is the ultimate cynic and that the reason God mentions Job to him is that if the supreme skeptic can be convinced of Job’s piety then Job must be the pinnacle of human faith.\textsuperscript{165} However, what God ends up with, according to Whybray, is a trial where his entire system of governance is at stake:

The meaning of the phrase ‘skin for skin’, possibly a current idiom, is uncertain; but the meaning of the remainder of v. 4 and of v. 5 is clear. The Satan expresses the belief that even a pious person whose faith is not shaken by a sudden reversal of material fortune will nevertheless turn against God if threatened with death, since to die is to lose everything that makes life worth living. In making this assertion the Satan expresses a total cynicism about human nature: he implies that true piety among human beings does not exist. This is, in effect, a challenge to the whole enterprise of God’s creation of mankind.\textsuperscript{166} In order for the statement of Whybray to be true, Job would actually have to be a pious man. While it is true that in the end Job does prove himself to be pious, the question at this point in the narrative is not will a pious man lose his faith if faced with death, but is

\textsuperscript{165}Habel, \textit{The Book of Job}, 1985, 90.
\textsuperscript{166}Norman Whybray, \textit{Job} (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 33.
Job really a pious man or has he just learned to look like one. It seems that what the śāṭān is actually saying is that feigned piety would crumble in the shadow of death. Whybray, himself recognizes this when, regarding the first test, he states, “He suggests that Job’s piety is spurious; that Job only appears to be religious so that God may continue to confer prosperity.”167 Granted that by the time of the second test Job is no longer prosperous, this does not mean that this notion is no longer valid. Job could, for example, believe that he had somehow slipped in his piousness and had been punished, which causes him to appear more pious than before, or he could believe that if he remains pious the Lord will bring back his material possessions to him. These solutions are merely ways in which to fill the gap and there is no textual evidence for them. However, they are possible and it seems that the śāṭān’s purpose is to seek out such possibilities.

The śāṭān and Independence

It has been pointed out that the name Yahweh occurs seven times in the two scenes with the śāṭān, but only three times in the rest of the prologue of Job.168 This has been interpreted as the author’s way of emphasizing the sovereignty and superiority of Yahweh.169 Hartley summarizes the issue,

Many scholars speak of this transaction between Yahweh and the Satan as a wager. But this is inaccurate, for no sum was set to be handed over to the winner. The single issue at stake was the motivation for Job’s upright behavior and his fear of God. The Satan functions as God’s servant, solely an instrument in the testing. The author holds to a pure monotheism wherein God is ultimately responsible for all that happens.170

167 Whybray, Job, 31.
168 Cf. Job 1:6, 7 (x2), 8, 9, 12 (x2); 2:1 (x2), 2 (x2), 3, 4, 6, 7 and Job 1:21 (x3). Hartley says, “No doubt the name Yahweh appears in these scenes because the author wants to stress Yahweh’s sovereignty, specifically his complete superiority to the Satan.” Hartley, The Book of Job, 70.
169 Hartley, The Book of Job, 70.
Ultimately, for the šāṭān to be operating outside of God’s will would be to present a being powerful enough to usurp the authority of Yahweh. Clearly, the šāṭān in this passage answers to God and must request permission to act. Therefore, it is not appropriate to interpret the šāṭān as an opponent of Yahweh; if anything he appears to serve God.

This leaves the interpreter with some exegetical issues, for if the šāṭān is completely subservient to God, can there be any independence in the šāṭān here? Hartley explains the paradox,

Some scholars conjecture that the Satan may be the prosecuting attorney of the heavenly council. If this view is correct, his task on earth was to discover human sins and failures and to bring his findings before the heavenly assembly. But his role in this scene deviates from this explanation. Instead of uncovering disruptive plans, he acts as a troublemaker, a disturber of the kingdom.\(^{171}\)

McKenna also notes that the šāṭān appears to be overly enthusiastic about fulfilling his mandate, to the point where he seems to use torture in order to uncover flaws in human character.\(^{172}\) Lévêque says,

Satan fait preuve vis-à-vis de l’homme d’une animosité inexplicable, qui reste en tout cas inexpliquée dans le livre de Job. Il paraît condamné – depuis quand, on ne sait – à flaire partout le mal et à douter toujours du bien. Avec une sorte de rage irrationnelle, il s’acharne sur Job comme pour se venger d’une trop longue impuissance.\(^{173}\)

According to this theory the way in which the šāṭān speaks to Yahweh and the words that he uses suggests a barely controlled rage, that is not satisfied with one set of tests, but demands a second set. However, as has been demonstrated above, these interpretations are not the best understanding of the portrayal of the šāṭān.

\(^{171}\) Hartley, The Book of Job, 72.
\(^{172}\) David L. McKenna, Job (CC; Waco: Word, 1986), 43.
Proponents of this view claim that there is a similar literary technique to a *tiqqune sopherim* (the change of the MT text from curse to bless) in 2:5 which the masoretic scribes used to replace the šāṭān’s prediction of Yahweh being cursed by Job suggests that the concept was so theologically difficult that there needed to be a scribal change. That the šāṭān would use such difficult language suggests something about the nature of the šāṭān in this passage. That the šāṭān is subservient to Yahweh in this passage cannot be questioned, but is there room to see a developing independence in the šāṭān, which would also be consistent with the later developments, in the intertestamental literature and the New Testament, regarding Satan? The answer would be “No” if based on this evidence alone. For the *tiqqune sopherim* is not only found on the lips of the šāṭān, but also on the lips of the pious Job (1:5) and his wife (2:9).

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\textsuperscript{a} This appendix comes from Ellen White, “The Purpose and Portrayal of the Satan in the Old Testament (Th.M. thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2004), 42-54. This appendix is reproduced identically to how it appeared in the thesis, including the original footnote numbers. It also reproduces any spelling or stylistic errors. Factual errors are corrected in notes b, d, e, f, g, h and j below.

\textsuperscript{b} The following quotation was misattributed to Nickelsburg in the original thesis, but it should have been credit to Simon B. Parker, “Sons of (the) God(s),” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (ed. Karel van der Toorn, Pieter W. van Horst, and Bob Becking; 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 798.


\textsuperscript{d} This claim should be attributed to Parker, “Sons of (the) God(s),” 798.

\textsuperscript{e} Brueggemann’s name is misspelled in the original thesis.

\textsuperscript{f} This quotation should read “… may not go.”

\textsuperscript{g} The Hebrew title in the footnote was incorrect in the original thesis and should read “ستطيع”

The T in this quotation should have a diacritical . underneath it in order to indicate it is a tet.

For a survey of these traditional interpretations, see now Ansgar Kelly, *Satan: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 265-76.

This should read “tiqqun” because it is a singular reference.
Appendix D: Exegesis of Zechariah 3

In Zechariah 3, Joshua is being appointed high priest and the šāṭān is present with an objection. One may wonder why there is a need to question the appointment of Joshua, especially when other divine appointments (e.g. Isaiah) are not questioned or when appointing a Zadokite priest, as they have held the position in the past. Yet, this could be the precise reason there is a need to question the appointment of Joshua. The biblical text is full of examples of the misdeeds of the priesthood. The book of Ezekiel gives a vivid depiction of the depravity taking place in the temple before the fall of Jerusalem (see Ezekiel 8 in particular). Other passages, such as Jer 8:2 and 2 Chron 36:14, refer to the priesthood specifically. If the ancestors of Joshua were so corrupt, why would Joshua be any different? There may have been factions of the Restoration Community in Yehud or in the Diaspora who would have asked just such a question. Therefore, the šāṭān could be a means of giving voice to these concerns and adding an indisputable divine placement of Joshua in the role of high priest.

This may not be the only concern that the šāṭān is representing. There may have been those who had concerns about Joshua because he was returning to the land after having been displaced. Day says, “For those Yahwists who had remained in the land and had not been deported to Mesopotamia, the idea of a ‘foreign’ priest presiding over the temple cult may have been a point of contention.” She suggests that this concern may have been based on the idea that Joshua was polluted by the religious cultures of other

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nations and therefore more likely to follow the example of his predecessors.\footnote{Day, 
\textit{An Adversary}, 120 – 121.} One does not have to conclude that the \( \text{sāṭān} \) represents one or another of these claims, but rather that there are potential community concerns to the appointment of Joshua and the \( \text{sāṭān} \) could be a generic representation of such concerns. In other words, whatever objections were raised regarding Joshua were seen as illegitimate in Heaven.

\footnote{Ellen White, “The Purpose and Portrayal of the \( \text{sāṭān} \) in the Old Testament” (Th.M. Thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2004), 23-24. This appendix is reproduced identically to how it appeared in the thesis, including the original footnote numbers. It also reproduces any spelling or stylistic errors.}
Appendix E: Exegesis of Zechariah 3 Continued

The context of Zech. 3:1-7 appears to be the divine council. Present at this meeting of the council are the šāṭān, a specific messenger of Yahweh, and Joshua. It seems that the šāṭān intends to accuse Joshua for the text tells the reader of the šāṭān’s intent. However, no speech is actually attributed to the šāṭān, but a rebuke is delivered from Yahweh, perhaps for the intended accusation. The Lord then redeems Joshua and provides him with new clothes as he is installed in the office of high priest. In this passage the legal context of the heavenly council is again depicted. This is not the only parallel to Job. In both passages the šāṭān comes before the Lord and his role is as an accuser. Yahweh also speaks to the šāṭān in both places and other angels are present. Also similar to Job is that the function of the šāṭān in this passage is related to the verb used to describe his action. In fact, the verb translated as “to accuse him” is the verbal form of šāṭān (šēṣiēnō). This strengthens the argument that the šāṭān is a title related to the function of the character, rather than the name of God’s enemy.

He is presented as being on the right hand side of the malʾāk of Yahweh, which is the typical position for the prosecuting attorney in the Ancient Near East. The Meyers’ claim that this role is similar to the modern concept of a prosecutor, who does not stand

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242 Conrad identifies the messenger or Yahweh in this passage as being the historical Haggai; see Edgar W. Conrad, Zechariah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 88. However, his hypothesis seems tenuous at best and does not find support in other literature. Also, the messenger of Yahweh is usually seen as a character in its own right. As mentioned in the previous chapter the messenger of Yahweh often seems to be the same as Yahweh. This is one of the texts where it is difficult to decipher if it is Yahweh or the messenger of Yahweh or if it is both at the same time.

243 See Exod 29:4 and Lev 8:7 for examples of priestly consecration demonstrated by a change of clothes.

244 That this is the installation of Joshua as high priest; see Michael Prokurat, Haggai and Zechariah 1-8: A Form Critical Analysis (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1989), 337-38.

for any particular group, but represents the court itself. The courtroom context can also be seen through the language used in this part of the text. The reader is told that Joshua has appeared “before the Lord” (1:1). This pattern is present throughout the pericope: “The verb for ‘stand’ recurs in this verse and is found again once each in verses 3, 4, 5, and 7. It is a key word, making the audience fully aware, from first to last, of the divine council setting and of Yahweh’s exalted presence.” This is a standard judicial formula, which can be used of both the plaintiff (Num 27:2; 1 Kgs 3:16) and the defendant (Num. 35:12; Deut 19:17; Josh 20:6). It can also be used more generally to apply to someone who is supplicating before a superior (Deut 1:38; 1 Kgs 1:2; 1 Kgs 10:8).

The imagery of the divine council in this passage differs slightly from the passage in Job. Here the courtroom context is more predominant. There is little debate that the šāṭān is the prosecuting attorney as he is depicted as being on the right hand side of the malʾāk of Yahweh, which is the traditional place for the representative of the prosecution (Ps. 109:6):

From time immemorial, in the ancient world until the present, a figure equivalent to a Public Prosecutor has been the first officer of any court. It is hard to imagine any developed society in which such a person did not play a role. The Accuser is clearly the leading figure in this case, despite his dismissal. Yahweh himself and not the Angel of Yahweh rebukes him; for the Angel of Yahweh is the Public Defender or advocate – the second, not the first, officer in any court.

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246 Meyers and Meyers, Haggai, Zechariah, 185.
247 Meyers and Meyers, Haggai and Zechariah, 183.
249 Wright, Zechariah and His Prophecies, 46.
250 Meyers and Meyers, Haggai and Zechariah, 185.
Joshua is present as the defendant, Yahweh (or the messenger of Yahweh) is the judge, and the šāṭān is the prosecutor.251 Contrary to this, Redditt argues that Yahweh is the defense attorney. He says, “Before Satan could even speak, God demanded his silence with a rebuke. The time for accusing was past; the time for absolving had arrived. Instead of serving as the judge, God was serving as the attorney for the defense!”252 Whether as the defense attorney or as the judge, the text clearly depicts Yahweh as siding with Joshua, either by vocation or verdict.

The šāṭān in this passage is the representative of justice (e.g. the court prosecutor), he is not an opponent of humanity. Conrad says, “This character should not be understood as the devil, a divine being in opposition to the Lord, as Satan came to be understood in later times…but indicates rather a vocational function, and the phrase is similar to phrases such as ‘the prophet’, ‘the messenger’ or ‘the priest’.”253 Because others can act as a šāṭān and yet not be the šāṭān (Numbers 22:22), it is also indicative of being the head representative of that role. To apply a modern day example, the šāṭān would be similar to the District Attorney (DA), which means there can be other people acting as prosecutors (i.e. Assistant District Attorneys), but that they are operating on behalf of the person who holds the authority and power, which in the modern world would be the DA, but in the Divine Council would be the šāṭān.254

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251 Merrill, Haggai, Zechariah, 132.
252 Redditt, Haggai, Zechariah, 63.
253 Conrad, Zechariah, 89.
254 It has also been suggested that “the seven eyes of Yahweh ranging through the whole earth” in 4:7 relates to the function of the šāṭān in Job. Here, the šāṭān, is also a title not a proper name. Meyers and Meyers point to another similarity, “Neither in Job nor in Zechariah is the Accuser an independent entity with real power, except that which Yahweh consents to give him. The figure thus originates with the Divine Council and šāṭān represents one of the ‘sons of God’ who is given increasing power as in the Prologue of Job, where Yahweh has given him control over a variety of negative and hostile forces in the world” (Meyers and Meyers, Haggai, Zechariah, 184). It is apparent in this passage that the šāṭān is completely incapable of acting on his own, outside of God’s commands as he is silenced immediately upon God’s
The Rebuke

Petersen has attempted to demonstrate that when Yahweh uses the verb *gōr* (3:2), translated “rebuke,” that it is used of those who oppose Israel or Yahweh’s will (Isa 17:13; Ps 9:6; 119:21). Therefore, the point is that when the *šātān* is rebuked with the use of this verb, his claim was either against Israel or the will of Yahweh or perhaps both.

Without joining an intense debate about the nature of prophecy and whether or not it declined as Israelite history progressed, it should be noted that Zechariah (and Haggai) have been associated with those prophets who hold power instead of being more revolutionary. Conrad says, “In contrast (to Deutero-Isaiah) Haggai and Zechariah were understood as serving the interests of those in power and as lacking ‘the revolutionary element which was always an essential ingredient in genuine prophecy.’” Should this be the case then if the *šātān* was intending to make a claim against one of the leaders (in this case Joshua) then it is natural that Zechariah would have had the words suppressed in his vision. One does not have to accept this point of view about prophecy in order for this to be true. Zechariah has been shown to hold a close relationship to those in power, but one could argue that those in power held it legitimately based on the divine revelations of Zechariah and therefore, the suppression of the *šātān*’s opposition is just another expression of the divine sanction on the current leadership. Either motivation,

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rebuke and not heard from again. Tidwell picks up on this point and says, “Similarly, that the seven eyes of Yahweh ‘range through the whole earth,’ corresponds exactly to the function of the *šātān* in Job 1:7 and 2:2. Also, that same *šātān*, together with the *bēnē (hā) ’êlōhîm*, present themselves before Yahweh precisely as the chariot/spirits do in Zechariah’s eighth vision (5:5), while, in the first vision, the four horsemen are sent ‘to patrol the earth,’ in the same way as the *šātān* of Job (1:7; 2:2)” (Tidwell, “*wāʾōmar,*” 347).

political or divinely inspired, however, does lead to the possibility that the šāṭān was silenced because he represented views in opposition to those who ruled.

The second element introduced is that the šāṭān does not appear to be able to distinguish justice from circumstance. He seems to require naked justice without any consideration of external factors. Jung says,

Satan accuses, desiring naked justice, God is merciful and Satan has to retire rebuked. As in Job there is no joy in his attack, nor any display of sadness at the failure of his efforts. Satan is not the evil principle, but an instrument for good. He stands alone in his attack, the only accuser, no band with him, no trace of a rival domination or of an empire beside, and hostile to, God’s.  

It is not that the šāṭān’s claim is wrong or even unjust, but that the šāṭān has not been able to temper his justice to fit the new circumstances. As Merrill says, “The accusation is not stated but may be inferred from v. 3: Joshua is clothed with filthy garments. Satan therefore challenges his right to function in the cult under those circumstances.”  

If this is truly the case and many believe it is, then the šāṭān here is acting to maintain the purity and holiness of the cult. He is not trying to tempt Joshua into sin, but attempting to correct what he views as sin.

The third and final new element brought out by this text is that the role or vocation of the šāṭān is not a problem, but perhaps the way the šāṭān is practicing it is the problem. Meyers and Meyers says, “God’s rebuke is not directed toward the function of the Accuser per se, but rather to the way in which he is carrying out his responsibilities. He is using irrelevant and dated evidence; he has not rebelled against Yahweh’s authority.”

259 Merrill, Haggai, Zechariah, 134.
260 Myers, Haggai, Zechariah, 186.
purpose of the šāṭān, the one who is meant to test the piety of humanity, but in the way in which he carries out the testing. In other words, it is not evil for the piety of humanity to be tested, but it can be evil if this challenge is done through illegitimate means.

**Filthy Clothes Hypothesis**

Verse 3 says that Joshua was wearing “filthy clothes,” which suggests to some scholars that the šāṭān was accusing him of coming into the presence of Yahweh in “a state of ritual impurity.” Wright says, “But the accusations of Satan, though true (as proved by the filthiness of the garments in which the high priest ministered), were repelled by a gracious manifestation of God’s pardoning grace, declared through the Angel of the Lord.” One could claim, as Wright does, that because Yahweh acted and had Joshua’s filthy clothes removed and replaced with pure ones that the šāṭān’s accusation was legitimate. Therefore, it was not that the claim of the šāṭān was illegitimate, but that God intended to demonstrate mercy and grace toward Joshua, which would relieve the transgression.

It has been claimed that Joshua is the representative of all Israel. Stuhlmueller says that the “‘rich, clean turban’ indicates a symbolic reinstatement of the high priest and symbolically all Israel.” This is echoed in the words of Day: “The overwhelming

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261 Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 130.
262 Wright, *Zechariah and His Prophecies*, 47.
263 The word here translated as filthy, sô ’îm carries the connotation of human excrement which would be the highest level of cultic impurity (Deut. 23:12-14; Ezek. 4:12). Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 193.
264 It is interesting to note that mahālasōt is usually used with royal connotations opposed to the word which is usually used of priestly garments (Isa. 3:22, 62:3).
266 Stuhlmueller, *Haggai & Zechariah*, 79; Prokurat agrees with the position of Stuhlmueller and cites Ex. 28:36-38 and Num. 18:1 in support of this theory (Prokurat, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 338). Merrill concurs saying, “Inasmuch as the OT high priest represented the whole covenant people generally, it is certain that Joshua here symbolizes the remnant nation” (Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 134). Mason narrows the scope of the representation to those who have returned from exile. Rex Mason, *Haggai Zechariah and Malachi* (CBC; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 50.
majority of scholars who have worked with Zech 3:1-7 maintain that Joshua is a cipher for the restored community, and that his change of clothes represents the change in the community’s status from impure to pure (or sinful to forgiven) in the eyes of Yahweh.267 Part of the reason for this interpretation is the parallel between this passage and Amos 4:11. Here Joshua is said to be a “brand plucked from the fire” (Zech 3:27). In Amos 4:11 all of Israel is said to be like “a brand plucked from the fire.”268 One could argue that upon hearing this phrase that the Israelites would automatically think of Joshua as a symbol for the nation.269

However, it may be that the filthy clothes are not the reason for the śāṭān’s accusation. Sweeney claims that the changing of clothes and washing is a part of the ordination rites found in Exodus 29 and Leviticus 8-9.270 If this is true then there would be nothing out of place in the presentation of Joshua and the ritual cleansing would be a part of the larger ordination rite and not a symbolic act of greater significance.

The śāṭān as a symbol

The śāṭān as representative of objections to Joshua

It has been suggested that Zechariah 3 presents the call of Joshua. It has also been claimed that there are many elements of this passage that reflect other call narratives,

267 Day, An Adversary, 117.
268 The text in Amos uses this phrase as a simile, whereas in Zechariah it is a metaphor. Petersen claims that a metaphor is a stronger literary device than a simile, see Petersen, Haggai and Zechariah, 192.
269 Stuhlmueller, Haggai & Zechariah, 78. Achtemeier suggests a narrow focus of the symbolism of Joshua, in that he is meant to be the representative of the Zadokite priesthood, which needs to be cleansed of the sinful practices; see Achtemeier, Nahum – Malachi, 121. Wright falls in between the two positions, or more accurately he encompasses both positions. He says, “he is represented in the vision not merely as laden with his own sins, but with those of the people whose representative as high priest he was before God. For the high priest was the representative of the priesthood, and the priest representatives of the people of Israel.” Wright, Zechariah and His Prophesies, 50. Petersen also agrees with Wright; see Petersen, Haggai and Zechariah, 192.
270 Sweeney, Twelve Prophets, 593.
especially as it is found in Isaiah 6. Some of the similarities are: a human is present in the
divine council; they are impure and in need of cleansing; both are cleansed and are given
authority. This has led some to see this as an investiture or divine call to the office of
high priest.\footnote{Day, An Adversary, 118 - 119.} An interesting difference is that the ṣāṭān is not present in the Isaiah 6
passage. If the two really are parallels one wonders why this character is present in one
and not the other. The reason may be very important. As in Job, the ṣāṭān is potentially
the voice that questions the system. In Job, he cast doubt on Yahweh’s system of justice
and reward. Here, he is used to question the fitness of Joshua for the role of high priest.
In Isaiah 6, neither Yahweh’s system of justice and reward nor the fitness of the prophet
is being questioned and therefore, the ṣāṭān does not appear.

One may wonder why there is a need to question the appointment of Joshua who
was descended from Aaron by Zadok (1 Chron. 6:3, 8-15), especially when other divine
appointments (e.g. Isaiah) are not questioned and the fact that the Zadokite priesthood
was the legitimate family for the high priesthood. His grandfather Seraiah was chief
priest in 587 B.C.E. (2 Kgs 25:18)\footnote{It is argued that the high priest position did not receive prominence until the post-exilic period, which is
demonstrated by the regularity which Joshua is referred to as high priest in contrast to the rather infrequent
use prior to the exile. See Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions (Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 1961), 397-398; J. Bailey “The Usage of the Post Restoration Period Terms Descriptive of the
High Priest,” JBL 70 (1951): 217-225.} when Jerusalem was defeated and the time of the
exile started.\footnote{Petersen, Haggai and Zechariah, 188.} Joshua appears to be born in exile to his father Jehozadak.\footnote{Petersen, Haggai and Zechariah, 188.} Therefore,
one might think that Joshua would be the natural choice for high priest based on
hereditary dynasty. Yet, this could be the exact reason there is a need to question the
appointment of Joshua. It could be said that, “there was ample precedent in the rejection

\footnote{Day, An Adversary, 118 - 119.}

\footnote{It is argued that the high priest position did not receive prominence until the post-exilic period, which is
demonstrated by the regularity which Joshua is referred to as high priest in contrast to the rather infrequent
use prior to the exile. See Roland de Vaux, Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions (Grand Rapids:
Eerdmans, 1961), 397-398; J. Bailey “The Usage of the Post Restoration Period Terms Descriptive of the
High Priest,” JBL 70 (1951): 217-225.}

\footnote{Petersen, Haggai and Zechariah, 188.}

\footnote{Petersen, Haggai and Zechariah, 188.}
of Eli and his line (1 Sam 2:27-33) for the permanent dismissal of Joshua and his line.”

The biblical text is full of examples of the misdeeds of the previous priesthood. The book of Ezekiel gives a vivid depiction of the depravity taking place in the temple before the fall of Jerusalem (see chapter 8 in particular). Other passages, such as Jer 8:1-2 and 2 Chron 36:14, refer to the priesthood specifically. If the ancestors of Joshua were so corrupt, why would Joshua be any different? There may have been factions within Israel who would have asked just such a question. Therefore, the šāṭān could be a means of giving voice to these concerns and because Yahweh rebukes the šāṭān, he also helps add indisputable divine approval of Joshua in the role of high priest.

This may not be the only concern that the šāṭān is representing. There were probably those who had concerns about Joshua because he was returning to the land after having been displaced. Day says, “For those Yahwists who had remained in the land and had not been deported to Mesopotamia, the idea of a ‘foreign’ priest presiding over the temple cult may have been a point of contention.” She suggests that this concern may have been based on the idea that Joshua was polluted by the religious cultures of other nations and therefore more likely to follow the example of his predecessors. Meyers and Meyers suggest the same when they say, “Viewed in a narrow way, the Accuser might have argued that Joshua had been in exile and was permanently contaminated by the experience, so he could not ever be qualified to assume the office for which he was next in line.” Mason also suggests that the filthy clothes are “a sign of guilt and

275 Meyers and Meyers, Haggai and Zechariah, 185. The authors also claim that the monarchy and the priesthood were “repudiated” together and that because the monarchy was not being restored, there would be those who would think that the priesthood should not be restored either (186).
276 Day, An Adversary, 120.
277 Day, An Adversary, 120-121.
278 Meyers and Meyers, Haggai and Zechariah, 185. This argument is furthered by VanderKam, who claims that the term brand (used of Joshua) is meant to be a pun of the word Ur for the Babylonian city
contamination from Babylon. One does not have to conclude that the śāṭān represents one or another of these claims, but rather that there are potential community concerns to the appointment of Joshua and the śāṭān could be a generic representation of such concerns. In other words, whatever objections were raised regarding Joshua were seen as illegitimate in Heaven.

The śāṭān as representative of objections to Jerusalem

The objections against Joshua are not invalid if one adopts the view that Joshua is meant to represent all of Israel. If this is a proper way to understand the character of Joshua, and many think it is, then the objections of the śāṭān would actually be more akin to the objection of the śāṭān in Job. It is a question of whether God’s justice is functioning as it should. Essentially the śāṭān would be the representation of the question, should God grant Israel redemption? Either way the śāṭān can be seen as the embodiment of concern for the action that is about to take place and in both cases the divine pronouncement is that these concerns are not valid in the current circumstance.

It has been demonstrated above that Joshua may be the symbolic representation of Israel. If this hypothesis is correct then the charge that the śāṭān levels against Joshua is probably intended for Jerusalem as well. This theory is further supported by Zech 3:2 where Yahweh responds that he has chosen Jerusalem, which suggests that the śāṭān’s accusation was against Jerusalem and not Joshua alone, especially since it is placed right next to the rebuke. This has led to the theory that the śāṭān believes that Jerusalem has

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279 Mason, Haggai, Zechariah, 50.
280 This is further supported by the approval of Joshua found in Haggai 1:1, 12,14; 2:2.
been rejected by God and therefore, should remain condemned.\textsuperscript{281} This would include the rebuilding of the temple as it symbolizes God’s favor on the people of Israel. If this is true then, “any efforts to restore either would be contrary to God’s will; temple restoration would be nothing short of blasphemy.”\textsuperscript{282} That the temple and the priesthood would be included in this injunction is demonstrated by the choice of Joshua, the high priest, as representative. Therefore, the \textit{sāṭān}’s claim is not only against Jerusalem, but also against the temple and the priesthood. This understanding has historical basis in the destruction of Shiloh and theological roots in the preexilic prophets and Lamentations.\textsuperscript{283}

Meyers and Meyers would argue that, “the Accuser need not stand for any special interest groups; rather, it would represent the powers of the court itself, Yahweh’s sovereignty. The Accuser in the biblical passages in which he appears acts as the Public Prosecutor, an agent of the highest executive authority.”\textsuperscript{284} This however, is not the best interpretation of the role of the \textit{sāṭān}. Clearly the \textit{sāṭān} is rebuked by Yahweh, which suggests that he is not properly exercising the authority of Yahweh. However, the same commentators suggest that his claim is potentially a reflection of those who had remained in the land as well as those who believed that the temple and the priesthood should remain in ruins.\textsuperscript{285} Therefore, even though they claim that the \textit{sāṭān} does not need to stand for special interest groups, they in fact support the conclusion that the \textit{sāṭān} is the voice of these groups.

As in the hypothesis of the filthy clothes, these claims would also be legitimate based on the contents of Scripture: “The Accuser’s case on both issues (Joshua and

\textsuperscript{281} Meyers and Meyers, \textit{Haggai and Zechariah}, 185.
\textsuperscript{282} Meyers and Meyers, \textit{Haggai and Zechariah}, 185.
\textsuperscript{283} Meyers and Meyers, \textit{Haggai and Zechariah}, 185.
\textsuperscript{284} Meyers and Meyers, \textit{Haggai and Zechariah}, 185.
\textsuperscript{285} Meyers and Meyers, \textit{Haggai and Zechariah}, 185.
Jerusalem) would have been quite strong, for there is much in the Primary History and in the preexilic prophets upon which he could have developed his argument that Yahweh had permanently terminated Jerusalem, the temple, and the priesthood. Therefore, it is not that the šāṭān was making an illegitimate claim or that he was acting out of a false malicious vendetta, but that he was fulfilling his function to be the officer of justice in Yahweh’s Divine Court. The accusation is dismissed, not because it is unfair, unjust, or false, but because God has chosen to show mercy and grace to his chosen people, city, and priesthood. Therefore, it is because God has extended mercy that the šāṭān’s allegations are rebuked and thus seen as illegitimate in heaven, not because they had no validity. It may appear that the šāṭān is operating outside the parameters of his job, yet, in reality he is merely not very good at his chosen vocation. Meyers and Meyers say, “God’s rebuke is not directed toward the function of the Accuser per se, but rather to the way in which he is carrying out his responsibilities. He is using irrelevant and dated evidence; he has not rebelled against Yahweh’s authority.” While this theory may not be one hundred percent accurate it does address some important issues. A better theory would view the šāṭān as still being under Yahweh’s authority, but using different evaluative criteria to pronounce judgment. It is as if the šāṭān is representative of blind justice and has no room for change, mercy, or unique situations. The šāṭān represents blind justice and therefore accuses; however, while the allegation is just, it is illegitimate because God has provided cleansing, which eliminates the basis of the šāṭān’s accusation.

286 Meyers and Meyers, Haggai and Zechariah, 186.
287 Meyers and Meyers suggest that the šāṭān looks bad in this passage because “he is unaware of the change in policy.” This language seems most appropriate to the situation in Zechariah 3 (Meyers and Meyers, Haggai and Zechariah, 186).
288 Meyers and Meyers, Haggai and Zechariah, 186.
Ellen White, “The Purpose and Portrayal of the śāṭān in the Old Testament” (Th.M. Thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2004), 72-84. This appendix is reproduced identically to how it appeared in the thesis, including the original footnote numbers. It also reproduces any spelling or stylistic errors. Factual errors are corrected in note b below.

b There should be no apostrophe after the “l” in this transliteration.

c This should read 3:1. The Hebrew literally reads “before ml’k yhwh” and thus my translation here is interpretive.

d In addition to the material in note 269, I would now add: Prokurat agrees with Stuhlmueller and cites Exod 28:36-38 and Num 18:1 in support of this theory: Prokurat, “Haggai and Zechariah,” 338. Merrill concurs, saying, “Inasmuch as the OT high priest represented the whole covenant people generally, it is certain that Joshua here symbolizes the remnant nation” (Merrill, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, 134). Mason narrows the scope of the representation to those who have returned from exile: Rex Mason, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi (Cambridge Bible Commentary; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 50.
Appendix F: The Dating of Job

The Book of Job has been the subject of much debate when it comes to finding a date for the text. The ancient Jewish tradition attributes the book to Moses. Scholars, such as Anderson and Hartley, attribute the text to the monarchical period (e.g. sometime between Solomon and Josiah, 970-750 B.C.E.). Others, such as Jenzen suggest that it was written during the exile in order to explain suffering. To further complicate the situation, there is also debate regarding whether the prologue/epilogue section of the text can be dated in the same way as the poem, the main body of the book (Job 3:1-42:6). It is not unreasonable to believe that the prologue was written earlier and the poem was a later addition or vise versa. Because the focus of this study is the šāṭān and this character is only present in the prologue, this discussion of the literary history will focus on the scholarly discourse regarding the prologue/epilogue section rather than that of the poem itself.

The Hebrew of the Book of Job demonstrates that the author had access to a much larger vocabulary than can be found in the rest of the Old Testament. There are also a significant number of Aramaisms and Arabisms. These features have led some scholars to suggest that perhaps the Book of Job was a translation from one of these languages. Other books, such as Daniel and Esther, have also been suggested as possible

57 Norman C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 9; However, a variety of rabbinic interpretations regarding authorship developed later. For more information see Pope, 1965, XXXII.
61 Examples of the differences between the two include genre (prose versus poetry) and characterization.
63 Pope, *Job*, XLIX.
64 For a lengthy discussion of the past theories of translation see Gordis, *God and Man*, 209-212.
translations. These types of theories are not the best solution to the problems raised by the text of Job. The first reason why this is so is that the standard principle in translation is that the translation is generally more simplistic than the original. Gordis says, “The difficulties of the Hebrew text of Job bear witness to it being the original.” He claims that this is true if all other things were equal; however, he also claims that they are not equal. He argues that there is nothing in pre-Islamic Arabic literature that has a similar nature to Job and that their polytheistic worldview would not have produced a text with the spiritual concerns of Job. As far as the Aramaic translation hypothesis, Gordis claims that it makes too many assumptions to be convincing and the Aramaisms can be better explained by other theories. Gordis says, these assumptions include an original composition in Aramaic, the attainment by the Aramaic text of canonical status or at least of sufficient sanctity to warrant its being translated into Hebrew, the disappearance of the Aramaic original without a trace, and the acceptance of the Hebrew version as authentic and sacred. Moreover, the processes of composition, diffusion, translation and canonization must all have taken place within a relatively brief period.

Therefore, based on the assumptions one would have to make in order to sustain the translation hypothesis, it is probably not the best solution.

The genre of Job causes difficulty for one who desires to establish an accurate date. Unlike a lot of prophetic literature which is written to address particular concerns within the nation, Job appears to fit into the category of wisdom literature which tends to

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67 Gordis, God and Man, 211.

68 Gordis, God and Man, 210.

69 Gordis, God and Man, 210.

70 Gordis, God and Man, 210-211.
be written for anyone at anytime. Without the aid of historical content, Job could be
dated to almost anytime in history. The study of the date of the book of Job is further
complicated by the absence of familiar historical references, such as Abraham, the
Exodus, the Canaanite conquest, or the exile, and historical institutions, such as the
monarchy, the temple, or prophets. Some claim that such things were deliberately
suppressed in order to present an accurate Patriarchal time period.

There are scholars, such as Habel, who believe that the prologue was an early
myth or legend that dates to the time of the patriarchs. This idea is strengthened by the
many parallels between the text of Genesis and Job. For example, wealth is based in
cattle and slaves, religious beliefs and practices are simple, sacrifices are offered by the
Patriarch, without priests or a central location of worship, and longevity of life which is
found only in Genesis and Job. Habel would also suggest that it was not originally an
Israelite legend, but perhaps was initially Edomite.

Pope concurs with Habel in that he also believes that the Book of Job is based on
a much earlier legend:

The Prologue-Epilogue also presents a number of literary features and motifs
which are characteristic of Semitic epic, as known from Akkadian literature and
more recently from the Ugaritic texts. These epic literary features appear as a sort
of substratum which may well derive from a very ancient Job epic.

His assertion is further supported by the reference to Job in Ezekiel 14:14, 20. In this text
Job is related to Noah and Daniel. This reference to Daniel has long led to the claim that
Daniel also has an earlier legend; therefore, it is not a stretch to believe that the legend of

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75 Pope, *Job*, XXXII.
77 Pope, *Job*, XXXIII.
Job is also ancient, regardless of when the actual text of Job was written. In further support of this understanding are the numerous parallels to Job which can be found in other Ancient Near Eastern literature. The Canaanite Keret epic, which dates to the Bronze Age, even though it is fragmented, contains a strikingly similar story about a king who loses all and then is helped to regain it all by his god El. Similar motifs, such as loss and restoration, family and health, can also be found in this text. The ludhuš bēl nēmegi often called the “Babylonian Job” is as its nickname implies a parallel to the Book of Job, which is found in Mesopotamian literature. The earliest surviving version of this text dates to around 669-633 B.C.E., but there is reason to believe that it was first written in 1600-1150 B.C.E. There is also evidence of similar compositions from Akkadian literature as has been explored in J. Nougayrol’s work. Finally, the discovery and reconstruction of a Sumerian text by S. N. Kramer, which dates to the second millennium B.C.E., demonstrates that the motifs found in Job do not necessarily derive from a late date.

Habel believes that the poem was written with the legend of Job in mind and therefore, the archaic elements within the poem are used to preserve the patriarchal foundation of the legend. In other words, the archaisms in the texts have been intentionally put there by a later author in order for the text to seem older than it actually is. Essentially Habel is saying that the archaism should not determine the date of the text, but tells the reader more about the author’s intention and purpose. It is also possible that

78 Pope, Job, XXXIII.
79 Pope, Job, XXXIII.
80 Pope, Job, XXXIII.
the Canaanite parallels and archaism are due to later Phoenician influence. This paired with the Aramaisms could lead one to a post-exilic date for the text.84

It has been claimed that one can date Job according to the theological concerns found within the text.85 Theorists such as Terrien suggest that the Book of Job fits best with the theological needs of the exilic period.86 The idea is that the Book of Job must be an exilic composition because it deals with suffering, and therefore, must be related to Israel’s suffering in the exile.87 This theory ignores the fact that the question of suffering has been going on in the surrounding nations and in Israel’s historical writing.88

These are several reasons for arguing against the hypothesis that Job was written during the exile. The first reason is that most of the biblical canon8 presents the exile as just punishment for the sins of Israel. However, Job, the would be representative of Israel, is presented as an innocent victim whose suffering is undeserved. Should Job be an exilic creation to account for the exilic political circumstance, then it would be presenting an idea, even a theology that is not found in the rest of the canon.89 The other problem with this theory is that Job appears to be an Edomite.90 At the time of the fall of Judah, the Israelite relationship with Edom was hostile.91 Therefore, it is unlikely that an Edomite would be used to symbolize a righteous, unblemished Israel.92

84 Anderson, Job, 62.
85 Anderson, Job, 62.
86 Samuel Terrien, Job (CAT; Paris: Delachaux & Niestle® , 1963), 23.
87 Anderson, Job, 62.
88 Anderson, Job, 63. Examples of individual suffering would be Hagar, Hannah, Joseph, and even David at times.
90 The theory that Job was an Edomite comes from the statement that his homeland was Uz, which is associated with Edom. For a detailed analysis, see Pope, Job, 3-4.
91 Pope, Job, XXXVI.
The more recent consensus dates the composition of Job to the post-exilic period. There are several reasons for this date, such as the emphasis placed on wisdom literature during this period of history. The shift from community focus to an individualistic focus within the cultic realm began in the early part of the Second Temple period and this shift is reflected in Job. The two most important arguments in favour of this hypothesis is that there is a good case to be made that the text of Job relies on Second Isaiah and secondly, that the character of the šāṭān had a history of development and therefore, the text of Job can be dated based on its use of the šāṭān.

Jobian concerns, such as individual suffering, can be seen in Second Isaiah, especially in the Servant Songs (see Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-7; 50:4-9; 53:1-12; cf. Isa 41:20 and Job 12:9) and in Jeremiah (cf. Job 3 and Jer. 20:7-18). Yet, this cannot settle the issue of dating because either side can argue that one is dependant on the other. For example, if one believed that Job was the earlier text, one could argue that Job came first and these shared ideas were adopted by the later authors. On the other hand, if one believed that Job was written later, one could argue that the texts in Isaiah and Jeremiah came first and the author of Job used these concepts which were already present.

The character of the šāṭān is often mentioned in the arguments regarding dating. When using this figure to try to determine a date for the text one is left with three potential arguments according to conventional wisdom. These are that the prologue was added to the poem at a later date, that the šāṭān was added to the prologue at a later date,

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93 For an overview of this position and those who hold it see Gordis, *God and Man*, 216, 361.
94 Gordis, *God and Man*, 216.
95 Gordis, *God and Man*, 216.
or that the poem was added to the prologue, which did contain the śāṭān figure, at a later date because it is believed that the character is a later development.\textsuperscript{99} The assumption is that the śāṭān in the form in which he appears in Job is the post-exilic form known from the text of Zechariah 3; therefore, the presence of the śāṭān in this text indicates that this part of the text must be post-exilic.

For the purpose of this thesis what matters is whether the prologue was originally written with the śāṭān character or if the śāṭān was a later addition. The key issues involve the necessity of the śāṭān and the relationship between this passage and the one in Zechariah 3, which is post-exilic. It has been suggested by Hasse and Heiligstedt that the śāṭān is an unnecessary figure and could be removed from the prose without difficulty; therefore, they assume that he is evidence of a later redaction.\textsuperscript{100} However, as Dhorme points out, “The role of Satan in the prologue is of capital importance. To eliminate it is to mutilate most lamentably a narrative of which the graduated effects produce an admirable climax.”\textsuperscript{101} The motivation to see the śāṭān as a later textual addition seems to be a combination of the desire to date the text of Job earlier than the post-exilic period and the assumption that the śāṭān is a post-exilic development. However, a post-exilic dating of the śāṭān is not necessary, if one determines that there is a homogenous concept portrayal of the śāṭān throughout the Old Testament. Also as Terrien points out the heavenly scenes in Job are similar to the vision of Micaiah in 1 Kings 22:19-23 and therefore, does not have to be dated to the time of Zechariah because of the parallel. Based on this he says, “En fait, d'autres observations suggèrent que la

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{99} Dhorme, \textit{A Commentary}, 1xxvii.
\item \textsuperscript{100} These two studies written in German are explained and cited in Dhorme, \textit{A Commentary}, 1xxvi.
\item \textsuperscript{101} Dhorme, \textit{A Commentary}, 1xxvi.
\end{itemize}
période postexilique est impossible." While it is not impossible, as Terrien suggests, for a post-exilic date to be accurate, it does demonstrate that it is not a conclusive date.

Gordis is most likely correct in his conclusion that theories which date the text later than the third century are probably mistaken. Here again portrayal of the character the šātān plays a prominent role in the argument. While this thesis argues that there is no development of the concept of the šātān within the Old Testament, there is clearly a development which takes place during the Intertestamental time (third century B.C.E. and first century C.E.). By 100 B.C.E. Satan has become a prominent figure with a full history in the Wisdom of Solomon. Therefore, because the portrayal of the šātān in Job does not match the portrayal of Satan which developed, it is less likely that a late date of composition can be sustained for Job. This does not mean that a post-exilic date is unreasonable because the text of Zechariah is certainly post-exilic and the portrayal of the šātān in both passages is quite similar. The other noteworthy issue relates to the concept of an afterlife. This concept was developing in the early Second Temple period (536 B.C.E. – 400 B.C.E.), but had not gained general acceptance until later. The issue of the afterlife is mention in Job14:7-22, but Job does not accept the possibility that there could be another life after mortal death (v. 12, 19-22). Therefore, the text must be dated before the second century B.C.E.

There are also several very good reasons for proposing a post-exilic date for the text of Job. This dating is supported by Dhorme, Fohrer, and Gordis. The first reason for accepting this date is that the list of offices (kings, princes, counselors, and officials) in

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104 Gordis, *God and Man*, 217; Andersen, *Job*, 63, claims that the concept of an afterlife was not accepted until second century B.C.E.
3:14-15 is consistent with the hierarchy of the Persian empire. The trade route referred to in 6:19 from Tema and Sheba was cultivated during the Persian rule. Darius is known to have established a messenger service which may be what Job is requesting in 9:25 when he asks for swift runners. The Behistun inscription of Darius from 520 B.C.E. may be what Job is alluding to when he asks for his words to be set in stone and outlined in lead (19:23-24). These Persian elements are also relevant to the study of the šāṭān and his function in the text of Job. One element in particular is the parallel between the function of the šāṭān and the Persian spies; this will be addressed later in this chapter. As has been noted earlier, the šāṭān, Aramaism, and individual suffering all have been put forward in support of this date. However, these arguments are not as strong as the other arguments mentioned above which were put forward in support of this date, but they could be shown as consistent with this dating and therefore, as secondary evidence for a post-exilic time frame.

Because of the many issues involved in dating Job and the difficulties of each theory, this thesis will assume the working hypothesis that prologue of Job was a post-exilic document (5th to 3rd century B.C.E.). It also assumes that the story is based on an earlier oral tradition, which was not written until the Persian period began (5th century), but was written before the third century B.C.E. Because there are strong arguments for a post-exilic and an exilic date, this working hypothesis was decided upon because it provides the least significant change in relationship to the passage in Zechariah, which is post-exilic (see chapter 3). Therefore, since the portrayal of the šāṭān in both Job and

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Zechariah are similar, if the two passages are dated to the same time frame this similarity looks less significant. However, if an earlier date can be proven for Job the purpose of this thesis and its conclusions will only be strengthened. The arguments presented in this thesis are not tied to any particular dating of the Job text and in fact would be enhanced by an earlier date; this will be explored further in the conclusion of the thesis.

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a Ellen White, “The Purpose and Portrayal of the šāṭān in the Old Testament” (Th.M. Thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2004), 28-37. This appendix is reproduced identically to how it appeared in the thesis, including the original footnote numbers. It also reproduces any spelling or stylistic errors. Factual errors are corrected in note b, c, d, f, g, h, and i below.

b This should read “i.e.,” not “e.g.,”

c This should read “ca. 970-609 bce.”

d The consonantal text in Ezekiel is dn‘l, as in Ugarit (e.g., CAT I 1 6, 9, 11, 36), not dany‘l.

e This should read Danel not Daniel.

f This sentence should read “Essentially Habel is saying that the archaisms should not determine the date of the text, but tell the reader more about the author’s intention and purpose.”

g I should have said, “the retribution theology found in the Deuteronomistic literature, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel…”

h This is overstated, especially since Habel is overlooking the other responses to exile and suffering that are possible. His assumption that Job fits in with retribution theology is stronger with the prose portion than the poetry as הַשְּטַן is used to question the merits of retribution theology, but ultimately Job, through his actions, prove it and Yahweh, by extension, correct and all that was lost is returned.

i The beginning of the Persian Period should be the 6th century bce in both this sentence and the sentence following.
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