

effective rhetorical use of its revocation.⁵⁴ Other texts reflect the same understanding of deity. In Gen 3:22, for instance, upon acknowledging the humans' possession of "knowledge of good and evil" (perhaps a merism for full access to strategic information), the deity cuts off access to the tree of life so that the humans do not eat from it and live forever.

Because of its vulnerability, human flesh is used in multiple places as a symbol of mortality over and against the longevity and invulnerability of *rûaḥ*. The reference in such passages is not to the contemporary notion of an immaterial body, but to air, wind, or breath—an indestructible, unseen, and animating agentive force. This is particularly salient when contrasted with vulnerable flesh. See, for instance, Job 19:26, where Job insists that even after his flesh has been destroyed, he will see the deity. This further suggests the partibility of the person, and the positing of a locus of selfhood that outlived the body. YHWH asserts when limiting human life to one hundred twenty years in Gen 6:3, *rûḥî bā'ādām lā 'ōlām bašagam hû' bāšār*, "My spirit will not remain with humans forever, since they are flesh." The withdrawal of YHWH's sustaining spirit allows the flesh to decompose as expected.

Similarly, Isa 31:3 asserts: *ûmišrayim 'ādām wəlō'-'ēl wəsûsēhem bāšār wəlō'-rûaḥ*, "Now Egyptians are human, and not divine, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit." The idea here seems to be that the Egyptians and their horses—the symbol of their military might—are still vulnerable flesh rather than invulnerable spirit. Despite some attempts to leverage these contrasts to define deity according to contemporary notions of immateriality (Heiser 2015, 33, n. 8), there is no indication any such concept was in circulation at the time, much less a necessary and sufficient feature of deity (cf. Renehan 1980).⁵⁵ We are on much safer methodological ground observing that spirit was unseen, could not be destroyed, but could animate and even be destructive itself. Because of its conceptual derivation from the frameworks of unseen agency and deity, which is immortal—or at least considerably more enduring than flesh—there is a perception of comparative invulnerability.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ The counterintuitive notion of dying gods actually has some purchase in the ancient literature. See, for instance, Machinist 2011. On the notion of "dying and rising gods," see Smith 2001, 110–20.

⁵⁵ "The prophet's intent is not to articulate a flesh-spirit dualism, but simply to warn those who would seek support from Egypt. In comparison to the power of the spirit, the flesh is weak and feeble" (MacDonald 2013, 99).

⁵⁶ Deceased kin seem to have been understood to perdure as long as their names and memories survived. Transition to full deity status may have been a way of ensuring a much longer postmortal tenure. Assimilation to generic "ancestor" status could be understood as a transitional phase.