

As Sommer notes, P is concerned with “boundaries, their formation, and their maintenance,” but I would argue against insisting this approach represents a rejection of “fluidity.”³⁵ Sommer’s (2009, 38) framework of the “fluidity of divine selfhood and multiplicity of divine embodiment” addresses a phenomenon that extends beyond and is separable from the locus of the deity’s self or “body.” Like human persons, divine personhood was multifaceted and situationally emergent, which allowed multiple different loci for their agency to be operative. While P is absolutely concerned with restricting access to the loci of identity, the deity’s agency must still be free to operate in the world and among YHWH’s people.³⁶ As with D, compartmentalization appears to be the key. For instance, the *kābôd* was not the only alternative to a cult statue. In describing humanity as created *bəṣelem ’ēlōhîm*, “in the image of deity” (Gen 1:27), P also recasts humanity as an alternative divine image.³⁷ Similarly, Moses is rendered a deity (Exod 7:1), even radiating divinity after his mountain-top encounter with YHWH (Exod 34:29–35).³⁸ Even the tablets of the law, inscribed by the very hand of the deity themselves, were offered as an alternative to the golden calf, which (according to the text) was naively presented by Aaron as the deities that brought Israel up out of Egypt. As with D, the P source still reflects the communicability of divine agency, even if more clearly distinguished from the deity’s own self.³⁹ Ezekiel employs some of the central features of divine identity from P, but incorporates other traditions while expanding on and innovating both, mobilizing the deity’s self beyond the confines of the temple while still employing concepts of separable loci of agency and acknowledging the centrality of the temple within their sacred past.

³⁵ Hundley (2011, 30) has concerns of his own, arguing that Sommer’s model would entrap YHWH in the tabernacle, “thereby circumscribing his potentiality and potency.”

³⁶ Hundley (2011, 40) agrees that this is not a rejection of the fluidity model, but rather than address agency apart from a locus of self, he concludes, “in P the deity centralizes the point of contact between heaven and earth, limiting access to a single place so as to avoid divine fragmentation, divine overlap and competing means of and protocols for access.”

³⁷ See Herring 2013, 209–18; cf. McDowell 2015, 207.

³⁸ As Herring (2013, 127) notes, “Exodus 32–34 was consciously included in the Priestly redaction of the book of Exodus and can, therefore, be read from a Priestly perspective.” Herring develops this argument further on pages 128–37.

³⁹ Sommer (2009, 71–72) uses his characterization of P’s understanding of the divine body as “fire” to account for its variations in size, but I would argue this imposes a far stricter reflective framework than is necessary. These variations are the result of rhetorical expediency, not of some systematic accounting of the deity’s size and its variability.