

cognitive exemplars regarding what a deity was supposed to be, and it is that conceptual ideal that is in view in this section (cf. Smith 1990, 51).

As a result, we must engage the profiles of both YHWH and the other deities to tease out those features considered most prototypical of generic deity. I have advanced the proposition that the cognitive exemplars of deity in the Hebrew Bible were built on a foundation of the prosocial functions that facilitated the development, sociomaterial transmission, and perseverance of deity within their respective societies. Patron deities would be socially concerned deities with full access to strategic information who nurtured patron/client relationships with individuals or social groups whose behavior they monitored and whose social frameworks they were thought to enforce and protect. The prototype of this kind of deity according to the authors and editors of the Hebrew Bible was obviously YHWH, but there are multiple other deities mentioned that match the same profile for their respective constituencies, including Baal, Asherah, Chemosh, Milcom, and others. The significant degree of translatability across these various deities indicates the production and curation of their profiles related to conceptual templates shared across a broader sociomaterial matrix (Smith 2008, 37–130).

If a conceptual domain associated with deity is explicitly described in the Hebrew Bible as diagnostic of deity status, it should be considered to have been prototypical according to the reflective reasoning of the texts' authors and editors. Two such features are referenced on multiple occasions in the biblical literature, and both are directly linked to the intuitive roots of the production and social transmission of deity concepts. The first is full access to strategic information, which we find reflected, for instance, in the serpent's statement in Gen 3:5 that the humans would be "as deities, knowing good and evil" (*kē'lohîm yōd'ê tôb wārā*'), which I suggest is a merism intended to refer to all knowledge, from the good to the evil.⁷² Isaiah 41:23a, which challenges the deities of the nations to prove their divinity, is even more explicit: "Declare what is to come hereafter so we may know that you are deities [*wānēd'â kî ʾēlohîm 'attem*]." In 2 Kgs 1:3, the relevance of full access to strategic information to deity status undergirds the rhetorical question, "Is it because there is no deity [*ʾên-ʾēlohîm*] in Israel that you are going to inquire [*lidrōš*] of Baal Zebub, the deity of Ekron?" Beyond these explicit appeals to that access as central to deity, the feature is widely represented in the literature, particularly relating to YHWH. Saul's visit to the necromancer at En-dor, however, demonstrates that even a deceased human could display this prototypical feature (though here subordinated to YHWH). While Isaiah seems to insist full access to strategic information was a necessary and sufficient feature, that is more a rhetorical flourish than an essentialization of deity. The example

⁷² A *merism* is a way to refer to a whole by referring to opposite or contrasting ends of it. For example, if I said, "She searched high and low," the idea is that she searched everywhere, from high to low and everywhere in between.