

of the temple. Those subsequent consumers of the biblical literature to whom this text was known and was influential would have approached that literature with a new configuration of interpretive lenses with which to construe data regarding deity. Among other things, the text effectively extends YHWH's PATRONAGE, PATRON DEITY, and NATIONAL DEITY domains over the whole earth, universalizing Israel's deity and subordinating other deities to them. The deities of the nations were no longer peers with whom to compete, but marginalized subordinates. Once this specific configuration became firmly enough embedded in the perspectives of the societies for whom these texts were authoritative, references to other deities—as long as they were not worshipped—would not be as threatening to YHWH's sovereignty and exclusive relationship with Israel. This is likely the conceptual backdrop that facilitated the literary exploration in the Greco-Roman period of the heavens and its hierarchy.⁶⁵

THE BOUNDARIES OF DEITY

This and the next subsection will discuss the boundaries and the prototypes of deity, which will provide a segue to the next chapter's discussion of YHWH as an instantiation of generic deity. To introduce the boundaries of deity, I return to the creation of humanity in Gen 2, and particularly to the observation that the human in that chapter was formed (*yṣr*) from the “dust from the earth [*āpār min-hā'ādāmā*]” (or clay) and had the breath of life breathed into their nostrils. The conceptual overlap of this creative act and the creation and enlivening of a cultic image has not gone unnoticed by scholars (Herring 2013; McDowell 2015; Putthoff 2020). The humans' partial deification may represent an attempt to rhetorically frame humanity as the deity's divine image—thereby militating against the use of other cultic objects while also imposing an ethical mandate—without attributing full divine status to them. They thus approximate the fuzzy and debatable boundaries of deity (cf. Ps 8:6). Certain members of the human category who were significantly elevated in life encroached upon the threshold of deity enough to have been referred to as deities in the Hebrew Bible. In death, there seems to have been a natural blurring of the boundaries separating humanity from deity, with deceased kin and influential ritual specialists like the deceased Samuel referred to and cared for as deities, although none seem to have penetrated into the center of the category while maintaining association with their human identity. Indeed, Ps 82's revocation of the immortality of the deities of the nations and their consignment to the outskirts of divinity includes an element of humanization.

⁶⁵ See Reed 2020, 65: “the beginnings of Jewish angelology and demonology in the third and second centuries BCE may be best understood as part of an ongoing engagement with the past, for which writing, lists, and genealogies served as powerful technologies for both preserving and reframing memory.”