

profiles are more conducive to facilitating social cohesion beyond the boundaries of kinship. Sanders (2015, 81) suggests Israel's distinctiveness in this regard results from an early king having adopted the most popular personal deity as patron over the nascent nation of Israel.² There is thus a brand of distinctiveness to YHWH's conceptualization in the Hebrew Bible, but one that ultimately derives from the shared conceptual structures of deity.

THE CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURES OF YHWH'S DIVINE PROFILE

As a prototypical deity, YHWH was conceptualized according to the same base of unseen agency, but there is some unpacking to do regarding their occasional visibility. Like other agents, YHWH could be seen when their presence was reified through presencing media, but the biblical literature also suggests the deity's own body, independent of presencing media, was repeatedly seen. Esther Hamori (2008), for instance, has highlighted Hebrew Bible narratives in which the deity appears as a "man" (*'iš*) to biblical figures, interacting in ways that suggest a fully visible and anthropomorphic deity (Gen 18:1–15; 32:23–33). She calls this phenomenon the "*'iš* theophany," and describes it as displaying "a radical degree of what might be called 'anthropomorphic realism'—that is, realistic human presentation and action throughout the appearance in human form." Nevada Levi DeLapp (2018) has also interrogated the theophanic type-scene in the Pentateuch, finding a variety of narrative frameworks that facilitated YHWH's appearance to the people of Israel, including *kābôd* theophanies and other mediated appearances (cf. Savran 2005). Rather than representing a programmatic metaphorization of an "abstract entity beyond our comprehension" (Middlemas 2014, 93), these are manifestations of the intuitive salience of anthropomorphism in the conceptualization of imagined and unseen agency.

The deity was clearly thought to be, in rare circumstances, *seen*; but these occurrences remain confined to biblical narrative in which YHWH's appearance served paraenetic rhetorical functions and came to be assigned strict boundaries. Exodus 33:20 asserted that a human could not see the deity's face and survive, but at the same time, multiple figures still managed to encounter YHWH face-to-face (Gen 16:13; 32:31; Exod 33:11; Deut 34:10). In most cases, they express fear, however, or surprise at their survival, which sends the message that YHWH's face may indeed be accessible for extraordinary circumstances and figures, but it was otherwise utterly devastating. (This rhetoric is to be distinguished from the

² Sanders (2015, 81, n. 59) argues that van der Toorn's (1996) theory that YHWH was the personal deity of Saul elevated to national deity status at Saul's accession to the throne (1) "would require 11th-century data unavailable to us," (2) places "too much stress on a 'great man' theory of history," and (3) does not explain how the state was able to facilitate the popularity of the deity on a personal level (an unlikely direction of influence).