

As with the representation of other deities in the cognate literature, YHWH's body was frequently portrayed as enormous in size and power (Wagner 2019; Cornelius 2017; cf. Reynolds 2002). Mark Smith (2001, 84) notes that Baal was described in Ugaritic literature as "large as his own mountain, Saphan." This is reflected in descriptions of the enormous size of the deity's temple/palace, but also their throne and footstool, which dwarf other deities, whose feet do not even reach the footstool. The 'Ain Dara temple, in Syria, reflects this enormous size by depicting in stone a series of one-meter-long footprints, representing the deity's stride toward the sanctuary (Lewis 2020, 341). A pair of them appear at the portico, with a single footprint representing a left foot immediately before the antechamber, and a single right foot several meters ahead before the main hall. While Isa 6:1 describes the train of YHWH's robe filling the whole Jerusalem temple (the enormous size of which is described in 1 Kgs 6), the rhetoric describing the exaggerated size of Baal's throne is amplified several times over in Isa 66:1's postexilic description of the heavens as YHWH's throne and the earth as their footstool. As with the representation of other deities in the cognate literature and material culture, the representation of the body and its parts was symbolically rich. The deity's body and its parts were not materially represented merely for the purpose of representing the deity's form; rather, over time, the intuitive impulse to conceptualize the deity as anthropomorphic was adorned with elaborations on the significance and symbolism of the various parts of the deity's body. These elaborations were quite flexible, since, like the deity itself, they were unavailable for verification or falsification.

CONCLUSION

Despite some of the distinctive characteristics of YHWH's background among national deities of ancient Southwest Asia, YHWH's conceptualizations were rooted in the same intuitive dynamics responsible for the conceptualization of generic deity in ancient Southwest Asia. The direct relationship with the broader ancient Southwest Asian conceptualizations is most evident in the cultic artifacts from preexilic Israel and Judah and in the oldest literary strata of the Hebrew Bible, but even the innovations of later periods represented incremental elaborations on conceptual frameworks descended from those earliest periods and arising within and in response to Israel and Judah's own cognitive ecologies. Israel and Judah's rhetorical goals and needs, their sociomaterial circumstances, the nature and complexity of their institutions, and the events of history drove changes that nuanced and adapted older and more generic concepts, while the emerging technology of text facilitated the cumulative and layered aggregation over time of these different approaches to deity, collapsing the disparities of time and space that had previously separated these ideas, thereby enriching and