

(KJV, NRSV, ESV), but the text does not support this conflation. When Nahor initially confronts Jacob in verse 29, he refers to “the deity of your [plural] father” (*’ēlōhē ’ābīkem*). Jacob also refers in verse 42 to the deity of Abraham as “the deity of my father” (*’ēlōhē ’ābī*) and “the Dread of Isaac” (*paḥad yiṣḥāq*). In other words, the deity of Jacob’s father is *not* the deity of Nahor’s father. Rachel had also stolen Nahor’s teraphim (*tārāpīm*, often translated “household gods”). When Nahor asks about them, he calls them “my deities” (*’ēlōhāy*), and Jacob seems to defer to that designation, also referring to them in response as “your deities” (*’ēlōhēkā*). The narration, however, always uses “teraphim,” a term that seems to refer to some manner of personal presencing media, perhaps similar in form to the Judean Pillar Figurine, but indexing deceased kin (van der Toorn 1990; Edelman 2017). While the term is usually used pejoratively, 1 Sam 19:13 suggests even King David evidently kept teraphim handy.

In Judg 17:3, Micah’s mother (the name is “Micaiah” in Judg 17:1–4) uses 200 shekels of silver (that Micah had stolen from her and returned) to create a carved divine image (*pesel*) and a cast divine image (*massēkā*),¹ which were placed in Micah’s own shrine—literally, “house of deity” (*bēt ’ēlōhīm*)—along with his ephod and teraphim (Cox and Ackerman 2012). These are all treated in the canonical context as dedicated to YHWH, and the text contextualizes these actions in verse 6 by clarifying that there was no king in Israel, and that everyone did what was right in their own eyes. When an itinerant Levite happens by, Micah hires him on to replace his own son as his private priest. Later, a band of Danite scouts stops by and requests the priest seek a prophecy regarding their mission. After the favorable response by YHWH (presumably via the presencing media) and the success of their mission, they return to seduce away the priest and abscond with Micah’s presencing media. When Micah later catches up with and confronts them, he complains that they stole “my deities that I made!” (*’ēlōhay ’āšer- ’āšītī*).

It should be noted that none of the *national* deities of the other nations of ancient Southwest Asia are treated in the Hebrew Bible as functioning on a personal level. The fact that YHWH saliently operates on both a personal and a national level is not distinctive solely because of an editorial hand heavy with nationalistic rhetoric. Karel van der Toorn (1999a), Seth Sanders (2015), and Daniel Fleming (2021) have noted that YHWH seems in the earliest recoverable literary strata to function on the level of kin-based deity, which is not a common heritage for the national deities of ancient Southwest Asia. Instead, personal deities tend to remain personal deities as a result of their kinship-based purview, while national deities tend to be the distant high deities of the pantheon whose

¹ I treat these as two objects, but when Micah’s trove of presencing media is mentioned in chapter 18, the text only refers to the cast image. Some read *massēkā* as appositional to *pesel*, explaining what type of presencing media was created (e.g., NRSV’s “an idol of cast metal”), but the terms refer to two different processes of manufacture.