

storm deity, the “rider of the clouds” (Ps 68:5)—predated the use of the *kābôd* as a literary vehicle for YHWH's presence and agency in the sanctuary,²⁹ but once the *kābôd* became the vehicle of choice, the cloud remained a convenient means of obscuring its precise nature.

The statement in Exod 40:34 that the *kābôd* “filled [*mālē*] the *miškān*” further raises the question of the *kābôd*'s precise conceptualization. Aster (2012, 273–75) firmly maintains the distinction of the *kābôd* from any visual phenomena associated with it, but does not address the question of how the *kābôd* itself “fills” the *miškān*. It is not outside the realm of possibility that the *kābôd* was understood anthropomorphically, but it seems more likely the *kābôd* was understood as a substance capable of taking the shape of its container, such as the cloud, the fire, or even some manner of radiance. An additional question is whether this substance that fills the *miškān* is an extension or emanation from the divine body that is also located within the *miškān*, or a locus of divine agency that was partible from that body, which was itself located elsewhere.³⁰ It is, of course, not unlikely that there was no clear conceptualization of the *kābôd* undergirding these passages. They may be intentionally ambiguous precisely to muddy the waters regarding the *kābôd*'s partibility and form. If this is the case, the *kābôd* would function as literary prophylaxis for the deity's precise nature (cf. Hundley 2011, 32). The *kābôd* may have thus added an additional obfuscating layer to the presence of the deity, allowing the Priestly authors to preserve the notion of YHWH meeting with Moses in the tabernacle (Exod 25:22) while also obscuring the deity's form and providing an explanation for the dangers associated with seeing the deity. This seems to be the primary rhetorical thrust of P's renegotiation of the vehicles of divine agency: they manifest YHWH's presence, but they cannot be duplicated or destroyed, they obscure the deity's nature, and they are only accessible through the priestly class, of whom they are the exclusive purview. Even in its absence, the centrality of the temple—that fundamental material sign of divine presence—can still be maintained in the literary heritage that has been handed down to Judah

reflect their presence around the deity and the divine throne. These features of divine radiance are themselves obscured by coverings of goats' hair and tanned rams' skins. These skins can be connected to the practice of incubation, or sleeping within a cultic space to facilitate divine favors or visions in dreams. Animal skins and untasted sacrifices have been suggested to have been central features of the incubation ritual (Ackerman 1991).

²⁹ Thomas Wagner (2012, 117) states, “From the Pentateuch tradition came the idea of YHWH's covering with a cloud, which was transferred to the *kābôd*” (“Aus der Pentateuchtradition stammt die Vorstellung von der Umhüllung JHWHs von der Wolke, die auf den *kābôd* übertragen wird”).

³⁰ Peter de Vries (2016, 56) describes the *kābôd* as a hypostasis in those places where “we see mention of a fire or an effulgence that has a degree of independence from the identity of YHWH himself.”