Isa 31:3).[13] Note, however, that many of the parallel constructions employing *'ēl* and *'ĕlôha* in ways that suggest interchangeability with *'ĕlōhîm* occur primarily in texts dating to the Babylonian exile and later, which suggests either their semantic harmonization in later periods, or a growing concern for lexical variation in the relevant constructions.[14] In the earlier periods, *'ĕlōhîm* is almost always the noun of choice, and particularly when used with a proper noun.[15] The frequent references to "other deities," "foreign deities," "their deities," and "deity of GN," as well as *'ēl/'ĕlōhê (ha) 'ĕlōhîm*, "deity of deities" (Deut 10:17; Josh 22:22; Ps 84:8; 136:2) demonstrate that YHWH was conceptualized as one member of a generic class that had many other members. I would suggest the most precise construal of this semantic field in English is a spectrum from concrete to abstract: Deity ↔ deity ↔ divinity. Any point along this spectrum may be profiled by a given contextual use of the relevant terms.

Much has been made of the morphologically plural form of *'ĕlōhîm* used with singular referents, including YHWH (Gen 1:1; 1 Kgs 11:33; 18:27).[16] The most common explanation has for some time been the notion of a "plural of majesty," which views the plural as honorific or intensifying.[17] Three observations complicate that explanation, however: (1) the plural *'ĕlōhîm* appears in pejorative references to individual foreign deities,[18] (2) *'ēl* and *'ĕlōhîm* are used

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[13] Deut 32:17 is an interesting case. It refers to worship of *šēdîm* (*shaddays* or perhaps "demons") as *lō' 'ĕlōha*. This is frequently translated as "not deity," but the appositional clause that immediately follows refer to them as *'ĕlōhîm lō' yədā'ûm*, "deities they did not know." In agreement with Michael Heiser (2008b), I would argue *'ĕlōhê* there is to be understood in the titular sense: "they sacrificed to *shaddays*, not to the Deity."

[14] For example, all three terms occur with the same general sense in Dan 11:36–38.

[15] There are eighteen occurrences of the plural "deities of [PROPER NOUN]," and an additional seven occurrences of the singular "deity of [PROPER NOUN]," and all utilize *'ĕlōhîm*. "Deity of Israel" (*'ĕlōhê yiśrā'ēl*) occurs 196 times, with the highest frequency of occurrence in Ezra (1.68 times per 1,000 words), Jeremiah (1.49 times per 1,000 words), and 2 Chronicles (1.03 times per 1,000 words). There are no occurrences in Leviticus or Deuteronomy.

[16] Sometimes plural verbs occur alongside what appear to be singular referents. Discussing Exod 22:8–9, David Wright (2009, 256, n. 78) calls this an "emphatic formulation," citing in addition, Gen 20:13; 31:53; 35:7; Josh 24:19; 2 Sam 7:23. Multiple other Semitic languages attest to the morphologically plural use of words for "god" with singular referents. Extensive coverage is found in Burnett 2001, 7–53.

[17] Gesenius 1910, 124*g*; Ember 1905; Waltke and O'Connor 1990, 7.4.3*a–f*; Joüon and Muraoka 2006, §136*d*; Byrne 2011, 28; Beckman 2013, 3.145–46.

[18] For example, 1 Kgs 11:33; 2 Kgs 1:2–3, 6, 16. This demonstrably non-honorific usage of the "plural of majesty" is found in other Semitic literature as well. For instance, a "plural of majesty" in the Amarna correspondences is particularly undermined by the occurrence of the morphologically plural IR.MEŠ ("servant") with a singular referent in EA 47:11. It