

author's borrowing of a much older literary template, but YHWH is the only active deity in Ps 82 (McClellan 2018, 846).⁴⁰

The other significant change in the conceptualization of YHWH's divine council is the inclusion of human witnesses and participants (Lenzi 2008, 50–64, 221–72). Human witnessing of divine council deliberations is known from texts from Mari, Deir 'Alla, and Mesopotamia, although in the latter instances, the witnessing is usually secretive (Nissinen 2002; Gordon 2007; Lenzi 2014). Several factors likely contributed to the adoption of this theme in the biblical texts, including a need to stock the council after the participation of other deities became problematic, a need to provide a context for human reporting on divine council proceedings, and perhaps a desire to structure power in favor of non-royal prophets. A detailed example of a prophet witnessing the divine council comes from 1 Kgs 22:15–23, in which the prophet Micaiah is goaded into contradicting the king's court prophets regarding the propriety of the king going to battle in Ramoth-gilead. Micaiah casts himself as witness to the divine council's deliberations in 1 Kgs 22:19: "I saw YHWH sitting upon his throne, and all the host of the heavens stood by him, on his right hand and on his left." He then goes on to describe YHWH asking which of the host of heaven in attendance would volunteer to seduce the king's prophets into leading the king into battle so he will be killed. Micaiah is punished for his insubordination, but his prophecy ultimately proves to be accurate. The sixth-century BCE prophet Jeremiah hints at his participation in the council itself when he rhetorically asks in Jer 23:18, "Who has stood in the council of YHWH [*běsôd YHWH*]?" More explicitly, Isa 6:8–10 has Isaiah volunteer to carry a message on behalf of YHWH's council (White 2014, 80–86). Prior to the request, a seraph purifies Isaiah with a coal from the altar of the temple (Isa 6:6–7), apparently to sanctify him so that he can be in the deity's presence and can participate in the council.

While these innovations show the creative work of the authors, editors, and authorities who influenced these traditions and the texts that transmitted them, the Hebrew Bible's representations of the divine council are clearly founded on broader Southwest Asian conventions and traditions adapted from patriarchal household and administrative institutions to structure and frame the conceptualization of divine sociality. YHWH's role fits this framing and this divine sociality in a way that demonstrates its rootedness in generic conceptualizations of deity.

INCOMPARABILITY. When directed at YHWH, the rhetoric of INCOMPARABILITY was generally brief, employing language closely parallel to that of surrounding

⁴⁰ Ellen White (2014, 33) suggests Ps 82 narrates YHWH's demotion not just of the other deities of the divine council, but also of its leader, the high deity El: "Thus while Yahweh is a character in this divine council type-scene he is not the head of it (El is) until possibly the end of the psalm when he takes over the position of the council."