

used in different forms to refer to sacred spaces, cultic offerings, and to cultic personnel (van Koppen and van der Toorn 1999). An associated term in Ugaritic is *ṯhr*, which refers to purity and luminosity (del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2015, 875). In *KTU* 1.4.v.18–19 Baal’s palace is to be constructed of *ṯhrm*. *’iqn’im*, “purest lapis lazuli” (a stone frequently associated with deity—note the Akkadian parallel *uqnû ebbu*).⁴⁸

This last passage provides a link to Exod 24:10, which describes the deity of Israel as standing on a brickwork of lapis lazuli, “like the very skies in clarity” (*kə’ešem haššāmayim lāṭōhar*).⁴⁹ The Hebrew *ṯhr* is used in Lev 12:4, 6 to refer to ritual purification, and specifically for a woman who has given birth. Concepts of cleanliness and purity extend throughout the biblical representations of holiness. The brilliance associated with cleanliness, and the antithetical concept of uncleanness and pollution, appear to constitute the root metaphors for conceptualizing ritual/moral purity and sin (Feder 2014, 2021). Items purified for ritual use were marked for that use, often with *qdš l-*, “holy to” or “consecrated for.” This was a way to indicate the consecration of those items specifically and exclusively for use in cultic contexts.⁵⁰ A sense of distinctiveness is developed in the Hebrew Bible to refer to YHWH’s people as separated and distinct from the rest of humanity.⁵¹ This sense seems to be intended in Lev 20:26: “You will be holy [*qədōšim*] to me, for I, YHWH, am holy [*qādōš*], and I have separated you [*wā’abdil ’etkem*] from the peoples to be mine” (cf. Deut 7:6, 14:2).⁵²

In the Hebrew Bible, the other deities of the divine council can be referred to as *qədōšim*, “holy ones.” The designation even appears to be used in later texts somewhat euphemistically to refer obliquely to subordinate deities without explicitly acknowledging their deity, as in Zech 14:5, which asserts, “And

⁴⁸ For the text and translation, see Smith and Pitard 2009, 529–38, 569.

⁴⁹ For *sappir* as lapis lazuli, see *HALOT*, s.v. “סַפִּיר.”

⁵⁰ Two burnished plates discovered by the altar at the temple at Arad were inscribed with what appears to be *qk*, which most scholars understand as an abbreviation for *qōdeš lakkōhānīm*, “consecrated for the priests,” indicating their designation for exclusive use by the temple’s priesthood (cf. Num 6:20; Aharoni 1968, 20). Similar inscriptions are also known from finds at Beer-sheba, Beit Mirsim, Hazor, Tel Miqne, and Masada (Vriezen 2001, 48).

⁵¹ Cult specialists in societies around the world frequently engage in self-denial—often associated with sex or food—in order to achieve or project a sense of commitment, distinction, and proximity to deity that is associated with their station (Singh 2018, Singh and Henrich 2020).

⁵² As will be discussed below, the framing of Israel as being chosen by YHWH from among the nations—rather than the earlier framework of inheritance (Deut 32:8–9)—is likely an innovation that developed following YHWH’s accession to rule over all the nations of the earth.