

would be able to discern from the various contexts that *'ēlōhîm* is being used as a title that profiles YHWH. The most explicit contextual cue in this passage is the reference to the tradition regarding the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah from Gen 19:24–25, but the broader context of the author's prophecies, as well as other more explicit references to YHWH as *'ēlōhîm* / *'ēl* / *'ēlōha* would cue the reader to the same titular use, as would the location and situations attending the passage's consumption in antiquity. The title borders on functioning as a name. Similarly, an informed person on the street today in Salt Lake City, Utah, would understand “the Church” to profile The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, while an informed person on the street in Rome would understand it to profile the Roman Catholic Church. A Latter-day Saint in Rome speaking with a local would know to qualify their references to “the Church” if they intended to refer to the one headquartered in Salt Lake City. Similarly, without a contextual cue to mute the YHWH profile, that would be one of the most intuitive and automatic profiles for the concept. This no doubt helped facilitate the renegotiation of some of the ambiguous uses of *'ēlōhîm* that likely referred to other deities or to cultic objects in early literature (e.g., Exod 22:27).

All this is not to say that YHWH's identification as the prototypical deity did not merit reinforcement at certain times and in certain circumstances. One of the most frequent objects of the biblical authors' scorn was the tendency for the people of Israel and Judah to dedicate attention and resources to deities other than YHWH, and so asserting YHWH's primacy was a frequent rhetorical necessity. One of the most explicit attempts to emphasize YHWH's claim to deity was Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal, which was intended to demonstrate definitively that YHWH was “Deity in Israel [*'ēlōhîm bəyisrā'ēl*]” (1 Kgs 18:36). After YHWH sent down fire from the heavens to burn up the sacrifice and the altar, the gathered people fell to their faces to emphatically acknowledge (v. 39), “YHWH is the deity [*YHWH hū' hā-'ēlōhîm*]! YHWH is the deity [*YHWH hū' hā-'ēlōhîm*]!”

PATRONAGE AND NATIONAL DEITY. The previous chapter noted that about half of all biblical occurrences of the terms for deity occur in genitive relationships with individuals, groups, or territories. While a number of those occurrences refer to deities other than YHWH, the majority are direct references to YHWH, who was conceptualized within the same conceptual domains of PATRONAGE and NATIONAL DEITY. YHWH's profile as a national deity came off the same conceptual shelf as other national deities. That YHWH was the national deity over Israel/Judah does not require argument, but there is change in this conceptualization that merits attention. The earliest texts reflecting YHWH's purview over Israel and Judah understood it to be restricted to those nations. YHWH's defeat at the hands of Chemosh in 2 Kgs 3:27 is an example that was discussed earlier, but there are others. In 1 Sam 26:19, David accused Saul of chasing him out of the nation of