

as a burnt offering, catalyzing a *qeṣep gādōl*, “great fury,” that causes Israel to withdraw.⁴¹ In light of the consistent use of *qeṣep* in reference to divine fury—apart from its generic use in two Persian period prose couplets—the text is most reasonably interpreted to be indicating (rather reticently) that the sacrifice successfully invoked the intervention of the Moabite patron deity Chemosh, which forced the retreat of the Israelite forces (Burns 1990; Smith 2008, 116–18; Stark 2011, 91–92).

ACCESS TO STRATEGIC INFORMATION. Another transcultural feature of the NATIONAL DEITY domain highlighted in the episode in 2 Kgs 3 relates directly to one of the central prosocial functions of deity. In that episode it is linked to YHWH, but this domain is ubiquitous around ancient Southwest Asia and in the Hebrew Bible in relation to other deities, including cultic objects and the dead. After initial setbacks, the Judahite king Jehoshaphat asks if a prophet is around through whom they might seek YHWH’s direction. A servant of the Israelite king Jehoram directs them to Elisha, who reluctantly inquires of YHWH and then promises them total victory. This evokes the ACCESS TO STRATEGIC INFORMATION domain. Humans operate with limited access within this conceptual domain, but because full-access is central to the prosocial functioning of deities, the “full-access strategic agent” profile is prototypical of deity in the Hebrew Bible.

The most explicit example involving a deity other than YHWH is that of Saul’s interaction with the deceased Samuel in 1 Sam 28. As with 2 Kgs 3, the concern was to determine strategy related to warfare (cf. 2 Sam 2:1; Jer 21:1–7), but this was not the only reason full-access strategic agents were consulted. They were also sought after for help judging difficult legal cases (Num 5:11–31), for determining succession of leadership (Num 27:18–21; 1 Sam 10:20–22), for resolving illnesses (2 Kgs 1:2), and for numerous other reasons not clearly reflected in the Hebrew Bible. A variety of tools were available to facilitate divination, including the Urim and Thummim (Num 27:21; Deut 33:8–10; 1 Sam 14:41), the ephod (1 Sam 23:9–10; Judg 17:5), lots (Lev 16:7–8), teraphim (Ezek 21:26; Zech 10:2), and other cultic items.⁴² In the broader world of ancient Southwest Asia, the natural world was saturated with clues about strategic information, and accessing that information was primarily a matter of adequate education in the significance of dreams, the configuration of the stars, the shape

⁴¹ Some suggest this terminology indicates a peaceful departure, but the verse employs in conjunction with each other the same two verbs used to refer to Sennacherib’s retreat in 2 Kgs 19:36 after the messenger of YHWH decimated his troops.

⁴² See, for instance, the story of Micah in Judg 17 and 18. Micah makes an ephod and teraphim and has a hoard of silver made into a pair of divine images by a silversmith. These are used to facilitate access to strategic information, but are later stolen. When Micah tracks down the thieves, he calls after them, accusing them of stealing, “my deities which I made [*ēlōhay ’āšer-’āšītī*]” (Judg 18:24).