

(*’ēlōhē [han]nēkar*, Gen 35:2, 4);<sup>30</sup> “Baal Zebub, the deity of Ekron” (*ba’al zəbūb ’ēlōhē ’eqrôn*, 2 Kgs 1:2, 3, 6, 16); “Let the deity of Abraham and the deity of Nehor judge between us” (*’ēlōhē ’abrāhām wē’lōhē nāḥôr yišpāṭû bēnēnû*, Gen 31:53).<sup>31</sup> Except for certain references to cult objects (e.g., Gen 31:30), the genitive here does not indicate possession, but rather patronage, as demonstrated in Judg 11:24: “Shouldn’t you take possession [*tîrāš*] of what your deity Chemosh conquers for you [*yôrišākā*]”? Likewise, we will take possession [*nîrāš*] of all that our deity YHWH conquers [*hōriš YHWH*] before us.”<sup>32</sup>

This is the PATRONAGE domain, or the notion that deities were sovereign over specific social or geographical divisions, which reflects the fundamental prosocial function of divine agents. This is widespread in ancient Southwest Asian discourse about deity.<sup>33</sup> Parallel references to “your deity” and “our deity” in the Hebrew Bible suggest the underlying patron/client relationship was embedded in the generic understanding of deity.<sup>34</sup> Mark Smith (2008) uses the term “translatability” to refer to this trans-cultural sharing of superordinate conceptualizations of the nature and function of deity.<sup>35</sup> The fact that almost half of occurrences of words for deity are found within constructions that indicate such relationships demonstrates that the PATRONAGE domain is widespread and should be considered one of the prototypical features of deity in the Hebrew Bible. The prototypes of deity were patrons over peoples and lands.

Of course, there was no single conceptualization of patronage. The specific nature of the relationship was construed according to salient social frameworks and a society’s mnemohistory. Where deceased kin may have been understood to have purview over a smaller kinship unit (as assumed of premonarchical periods,

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<sup>30</sup> Note these passages refer to cultic objects. They are not owned by foreign peoples, rather they index deities understood to be patrons of foreign nations.

<sup>31</sup> While the first part of this passage refers to YHWH, the translatability of the ability of the two different deities to judge between Jacob and Laban displays the generic conceptualization of deity underlying the passage. The same is true of Judg 11:24.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Smith (2008, 102–3 and n. 36) suggests that while Judges and Kings are traditionally characterized as “Deuteronomistic,” this example and others that demonstrate translatability in discourse about deity “may be reasonably situated largely in the monarchic period.”

<sup>33</sup> See *KAI* 14.19; *KAI* 4.4, 7; *KAI* 222 B.5–6; *ANET* 534–35.

<sup>34</sup> Thus, the Israelite king Ahaziah instructs his messengers in 2 Kgs 1 to enquire of Baal Zebub in Ekron regarding injuries he sustained. Elijah’s confrontation with the king tacitly acknowledges the parallelism of the two deities’ roles, since Elijah rhetorically asks if he realizes there’s a deity in Israel (2 Kgs 1:3; cf. Smith 2008, 114–16).

<sup>35</sup> While there is much that was shared, the biblical authors also sometimes used distinct language and frameworks when representing non-Israelites’ discourse about the patronage of deities. This was in the service of the (usually polemical) rhetorical purposes of the author. See, for instance, in 1 Kgs 20:23, 28 (Rendsburg 2013, 1.903–4).