

his great fire, and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire [*mitôk hā'ēš*].” The repeated emphasis that this should disincentivize Israel from creating a divine image (vv. 16–19, 23, 25, 28) betrays the underlying motivation for the rhetorical compartmentalization. Both P and D emphasize a difficult to replicate manifestation of divine presence as a symbol of divine approbation of a cult location. P additionally restricts the vehicles of divine identity to the *kābôd*, limiting access to the appropriate authorities, and also obscures the deity’s form, emphasizing the danger of exposure to it, perhaps to discourage the desire for unauthorized access to it or attempts to reproduce it.<sup>32</sup> This structures power in favor of the priestly classes. Their interests may have been further advanced (at least by the time of the Second Temple period) by the visual correspondence of two of the natural byproducts of the ongoing functioning of the temple cult (namely, fire and smoke), and the two main visual attendants of the *kābôd* (namely, fire and a cloud). Seeing a cloud of smoke hovering over the temple by day and that cloud of smoke and the temple structures illuminated at night by the fires of the altar may have suggested to the observer the constant presence of YHWH while the cult was operative.

Ezekiel’s innovations on P’s presentation of the *kābôd* relate to its anthropomorphism, visibility, and mobility.<sup>33</sup> While P is interested in prophylactically obscuring the divine form, Ezek 1:26–28a provide a frank description of the *kābôd*’s form that anthropomorphizes it while still emphasizing its radiance and transcendence:

26 And above the dome which was over their heads was the likeness of a throne that looked like sapphire; and higher above the likeness of the throne was a likeness that looked like a human. 27 And I saw what looked like sparkling amber, like what looked like fire, above what looked like its loins, enclosing it all around. And beneath what looked like its loins, I saw what looked like fire, and radiance was all around it. 28 Like a bow that was in the clouds on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the radiance all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of YHWH.

---

<sup>32</sup> Sommer concludes (2009, 76): “For P, God has only one body, and it is located either in heaven or on earth, but not in both places.” Hundley (2011, 37) notes, “In the Priestly texts, Yhwh limits his point of contact with humanity to a single place and to an indescribable form, which may not be reproduced, and gives a single protocol for interaction, thereby eliminating all other places, modes of contact and means of representation.”

<sup>33</sup> On this innovation as a reiteration of “Zion-Sabaoth” theology, see McCall 2014, 376–89. As Aster (2012, 311–15) notes, this is the only literary layer where parallels with the Mesopotamian concept of the *melammu* are evident, but the rhetorical purposes for its deployment differ from those of Mesopotamia.