Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets

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DIVINE COUNCIL

(Prov 16:33), the Urim and Thummim (Ex 28:30; Num 27:21) and the inquiry of God through the prophets (2 Kings 3:10-20; Jer 21:2; Ezk 20:1-3) in order to determine the divine will or knowledge.

The Prophetic Books clearly distinguish prophecy from divination. It is, therefore, not helpful to characterize canonical prophecy as a type of divination, as is becoming more common today (see Kitz). False prophecy, on the other hand, is associated with divination (Heb root qsm) and is characterized as a human endeavor (Is 44:25; Jer 14:14; 27:9; 29:8 Ezk 13:6-9; 22:28; Mic 3:5-7, 11). The root qsm is never used of true prophets.

By forbidding divination, Yahweh wanted to encourage his people to rely on his word. Significantly, Isaiah told Israel to go to the living word, it is because they have no dawn" (Is 8:20; 58:11; 59:14).

DIVINE ASSEMBLY. See Divine Council.

DIVINE COUNCIL

The term divine council is used broadly by Hebrew Bible scholars to refer to the "heavenly host," the pantheon of divine beings who adulate Yahweh among the other gods. The divine council of Israel and its neighbors share significant features, the divine council of Israelite religion was distinct in important ways. This article briefly summarizes the more important aspects of the divine council in the Hebrew Bible and its relationship to the prophetic office (see further Heiser, DOTWPW112-16; 2008).

1. Foundational Passages and Vocabulary
2. Prophets and the Divine Council
3. The Divine Council as Divine Warriors in the Prophets

1. Foundational Passages and Vocabulary

1.1. Vocabulary for the Council

1. Foundational Passages and Vocabulary. Understanding the relationship of the heavenly council and the prophets requires an acquaintance with certain key passages and vocabulary. Psalm 82 is an essential text for understanding the Israelite divine council. The psalm contains an explicit reference to a divine assembly under the authority of God (‘elōhīm) along with a subseq


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with a subsequent plural use of the word 'elōhîm ("God, gods"): "God ['elōhîm] stands in the divine council [ba'adat-êlî]; among the gods ['elōhîm] he passes judgment" (Ps 82:1). The second occurrence of 'elōhîm certainly is plural, as the preposition "in the midst of" (bêqereb) precedes the term. The Trinity cannot explain this plurality, since the psalm goes on to describe how God charges the other 'elōhîm with corruption and sentences them to die "like humankind." Psalm 89:5-7 also places the God of Israel "in the assembly of the holy ones" (bîqhal gêdôšîm) and then asks, "For who in the clouds can be compared to Yahweh? Who is like Yahweh among the sons of God [bênê 'êlîm], a god greatly feared in the council [sôd] of the holy ones?" These passages clearly depict a heavenly council ("in the clouds") and not, as some scholars suggest, a council of earthly human judges. The concept of a council does not conflict with the notion that its head, Yahweh, is a great being, nor does it impinge on monotheism, since the Israelite understanding of the council saw Yahweh as a unique, incomparable deity who was the creator of the heavenly host and its unquestioned sovereign (Heiser 2008).


2.1. The Divine Council as Witness to God's Decrees and Acts. The divine throne room is the place from which Yahweh governs the world with his heavenly council, the place where "Yahweh's decrees directing the human community and the divine world are set forth and through whom they are communicated or enacted" (Miller 2000, 426).

The most transparent example of this interaction is 1 Kings 22:13-23. The prophet Micaiah ben Imlah, summoned to prophesy about an alliance between Jehoshaphat and Ahab and the fate of their planned assault on Ramoth-gilead, tells Ahab, "I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; and the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?'" (1 Kings 22:19-20). The narrative continues with Micaiah describing the spirits of the heavenly host deliberating with one another about how to accomplish Yahweh's decree.

The council therefore has the important role of bearing witness to God's decrees and acts. Not surprisingly, this notion is common outside the Hebrew Bible in cognate divine council de-
scriptions (Bokovy). Amos 3 describes the Lord's intention to punish Israel. In Amos 3:7 we read that "the Lord God does nothing without revealing his council/counsel (sōd) to the prophets." This declaration is followed by two plural imperatives in Amos 3:10 ("Proclaim to the strongholds ... and say ...") and Amos 3:13 ("Hear and testify against the house of Jacob, declares the Lord God, the God of hosts"). Again Israel and Judah are not the recipient of the commands, creating the distinct possibility that the divine council is called upon to witness the judgment meted out by the Lord (Bokovy).

2.2. Prophetic Commissioning and the Divine Council: Precursors to the Classical Prophets.

Broadening the conception of a prophet to someone who serves as the righteous spokesperson for God allows one to appreciate the motif of a direct divine encounter-commission in the lives of many biblical figures singled out for service to God prior to the period of the classical prophets.

The motif of a divine encounter is applied to the first man, Adam, whom God appointed as ruling steward over Eden, the well-watered garden and mountain of God (Gen 2:6-15; Ezek 28:15-16), the abode of God and his council. Proceeding from Adam, Enoch and Noah "walked with God" (Gen 5:22, 24; 6:9). The former "prophesied," according to Jude 14-15, while the latter is referred to as a "herald of righteousness" (2 Pet 2:5) who told his contemporaries of the coming flood, warning them of God's judgment (1 Pet. 3:20).

The theophanic encounters of the patriarchs are well known. Genesis 12:1-7 and Genesis 15:1-6 record God's appearance to Abraham, calling him out of paganism to father a people for God, a people who would serve as mediators between the Gentile nations and the true God. That this account was visible is suggested by the language of manifestation in Genesis 15:1 and in Acts 7:2-4, where Stephen notes that the glory of Lord "appeared" to Abraham before he journeyed to Haran. Yahweh likewise appeared to Isaac (Gen 26:1-5) and Jacob (Gen 28:10-22; 31:11-13; 32:22-32; cf. Hos 12:3-4). Later in the story of Israel, Moses was commissioned at the burning bush (Ex 3:1-15) and encountered God subsequently many times (e.g., Ex 19:16—20:21; 24:9-18; 33:7-11). The elders of Israel under Moses were commissioned directly by Yahweh (Num 11:24-25), as was Joshua (Deut 31:14-23; Josh 5:13-15). Various judges of Israel, leading up to the time of the classical prophets, also met Yahweh when they were called to ministry. The book of Judges records a dramatic appearance to Gideon (Judg 6), an event that the writer notes took place "under the terebinth at Ophrah" (Judg 6:11, 19). The reference to the terebinth is of interest, as trees often marked places where Yahweh had appeared to people such as Abraham (Gen 12:6; 13:18; 14:13; 18:1) (Nielsen, _DDD_ 637, 851). The prophetess Deborah (Judg 4:4) also apparently received messages from the Lord under "the Palm of Deborah" (Judg 4:4-5). The "word" of the Lord "appeared" to Samuel, the last of Israel's judges, as a boy, "standing" before him to inform him of Eli's fate (1 Sam 3). This theophanic manifestation apparently occurred with some regularity to Samuel (1 Sam 3:20-21).


The popular conception of a prophet is of someone empowered by God to foretell the future. But in fact, the forecasting of future events was an infrequent part of a prophet's ministry. To speak prophetically in the biblical sense meant simply to be a spokesperson for God, to serve as God's mouthpiece to his covenant people, Israel, and to their enemies. In biblical literature, God chose prophets and commissioned them for such ministry (see Call/Commission Narratives). This commissioning took the form of a direct encounter with God in connection with the divine council (Kingsbury; Nissinen).

The call of Isaiah, described in the book that bears his name, is no doubt the most familiar instance of prophetic commissioning in God's throne room (Is 6:1-9). The scene is quite reminiscent of 1 Kings 22:19-23, where Yahweh met with his council concerning the wicked King Ahab. Having decreed Ahab's death, Yahweh allows council members to suggest the means for the execution of the decree. In the case of Isaiah, after the prophet is purified for God's presence (Is 6:6-7), Yahweh asks the council, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Is 6:8). Isaiah immediately volunteers. The reader then learns that Yahweh has already decreed that his people will be judged, but he tells the prophet to preach "until the cities lie waste... and the land is a desolate waste." The council appears again in Isaiah 40, though its presence is hard to detect in English translations. The council primarily by the presence of God's group in a context (Cross). For example, "Comfort, 0 God." The two impossible plural in 1 commands "Speak cry to her." Two waited for response from God or Israel, receiving his commands. For this reason, many scholars point to the audience Isaiah 6 punishes, Yahweh and his court from exile.

Ezekiel likewise took the throne of God, brought to the land of Egypt by the river (10:1). The description similar to Yahweh's appearance 18; 20:18; 24:9-11, 17 and the throne room council meeting in D throne of Yahweh and receive his command (still rebelling). Like Isaiah, the minor prophet was commissioned with God. In Jeremiah, the vision of the prophet is hard to detect in English translations. The council primarily by the presence of God's group in a context (Cross). For example, "Comfort, 0 God." The two impossible plural in 1 commands "Speak cry to her." Two waited for response from God or Israel, receiving his commands. For this reason, many scholars point to the audience Isaiah 6 punishes, Yahweh and his court from exile.

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tions. The council's presence is indicated primarily by the presence of plural imperatives whereby God commands an unidentified group in a context that rules out a human audience (Cross). For example, in Isaiah 40:1-2 we read, "Comfort, comfort my people, says your God." The two imperatives "comfort" are grammatically plural in Hebrew, as are the ensuing commands "Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry to her." To whom are these commands intended for response? The answer cannot be Jerusalem or Israel, for they are the objects of the commands. For this and other contextual reasons, many scholars argue that the divine council is the audience (Cross; Seitz). Whereas in Isaiah 6 punishment was decreed, this time Yahweh and his council pronounce deliverance from exile.

Ezekiel likewise receives his mission directive before the throne of God. Unlike Isaiah, who was brought to the throne, this time the throne of the one who comes in human corporeal form, reaches out his hand to touch Jeremiah's mouth (Jer 1:5). This dramatic call legitimized Jeremiah's status as a prophet. Jeremiah 23 reveals that God judges a prophet false who has never had "stood in the council of the Lord" (Jer 23:16, 18). The Lord declares of false prophets, "If they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds" (Jer 23:22). The implication is clear: true prophets have appeared before the divine council, whereas false prophets have not.


Prophetic declarations of eschatological holy war also involve the divine council (Miller 1968). The divine council (along with human warriors) forms a cosmic army on the Day of the Lord in the writings of the prophets (Is 13:1-8; Joel 3:11-12; Zech 14:1-5). This language is in turn drawing upon other material in the Hebrew Bible that casts the divine council as an army (Deut 33:1-5; 2 Kings 6:15-17; Ps 68:16-17). This context also adds nuance to the common title for Israel's God, "Lord of hosts," for "host" (šābā') is a word used frequently in the Hebrew Bible for a military force (e.g., 2 Sam 3:23; Ps 108:12).

See also Angels, Messengers, Heavenly Beings; Call/Commission Narratives.


M. S. Heiser

**DIVINE PRESENCE**

Each section of the Hebrew Bible alludes to the divine presence, that aspect of deity that R. Otto calls the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (Otto, 12-41). Whether defined as the object causing the numinous experience (Tracy, 174-76) or the numinous experience itself (Otto, 12-35), the divine presence in the Pentateuch engages a numinous experience (Otto, 12-35), the divine presence abstractly reflects on it in the lyrical (Ps 10:1; 18:1-3), lament (Lam 1:2, 21), apocalyptic (Dan 9:20) and wisdom traditions (Job 28; Prov 8). Whereas an earlier generation claims that no deity but Yahweh deliberately “hides himself” (Miskotte, 267), contemp-orary readers counter that a growing mass of literary evidence, combined with a growing appreciation for the peculiarities distinguishing the methods used by historians versus theologians, nullifies such a claim (Podella, 33-70; Kutsko, 157-69; Burnett, 2). Aware of these develop-ments, the following survey lists some of the more prominent ways in which the presence-ab-sence polarity operates within the Prophets.

1. Imag(in)ing the Divine Presence

2. Prophetic Encounters with the Divine Presence

3. Summary

1. Imag(in)ing the Divine Presence.

Most references to “the presence” in English Bibles derive from translations of the Hebrew noun *pānīm* (*plural tantum*), both in its nominal as well as its prepositional formulations (Simian-Yofre, 608-14). Cognate usage occurs in Ugaritic (*pām* [CAT 1.2 iii 41]), Moabite (*lpny kmš, “Chemosh’s presence” [KAI 181:13, 18]), Akkadian (*panū* [pl.], the moon-god Sin’s “presence,” [Erra Epic 2C:151]), Aramaic (*pnh* [DNWSI 918]), Phoenician (*lpym* [KAI 26A ii 4]), Punic (*pn b’l, “countenance of Baal,” referring to the goddess Tannit [KAI 78:2]) and Qumranian Hebrew texts (*lpymh* [1QS 6:26]), so the fact that similar parameters envelop the semantic possibilities of Hebrew *pānīm* comes as no surprise (HAL 887-90).

Overlapping the semantic field of Hebrew *pānīm* stands the semantic field of Hebrew *kābad* (“to honor, glorify”) and its nominal derivative *kābōd* (“glory, honor”) (Weinfeld, 27-37). Akka-dian cognates appear in the Creation Epic to describe Marduk as greatly “honored” among the gods (*kaβātu [Enuna Elish 4:3, 5]), and ancient Near Eastern scribes often depict their deities (and the monarchs representing them) with crowned heads radiating fiery “auras” (*Akk melammā*). The moon-god Sin, for example, wears such an aura (KAI 26A ii 4), as does the war-god Assur (CAD “M/2:10”) and the scorpion monsters confronting Gilgamesh (*Epic of Gilgamesh 9:44*). It also appears in the Canaanite glosses from Amarna animating mayor Birid-ya’s complaint that Pharaoh “honors” (*kaβādu*) those of his neighbors who maliciously treat him, Pharaoh’s loyal servant, with contempt (EA 245:39). Similarly, Hebrew *kābōd* describes the terrifying glory and awesome majesty of Yahweh’s divine presence (Weinfeld, 29).

2. Prophetic Encounters with the Divine Presence.

2.1. Moses. Following the spectacular theo-phanic events on Mount Sinai (Ex 20–33), Moses’ face radiates a supernatural aura of its own as he descends the mountain to begin leading the Hebrews on a prolonged trek through the wilderness, an idyllic time (Ps 105; Jer 2:1-3; Hos 2:14-15) in which “prophetic revelations” (Knohl, 74) occur to him in a “tent of meeting” (“ōbel mō’ēd”) through “face to face” (*pānīm ’el-pānīm*) encounters (Ex 33:11). Portrayed as the “ideal mediatorial figure” (Orlov, 184) (see Deut 18:15), Moses participates in the first of these encounters, in Exodus 33:13-20, as follows (see Seebass, 328-30):

Moses: “If I have found favor in your sight, let me know your ways, so that I may (con-tinue to) know you.”

God: “My presence [pānāy] will walk [pl., yēlēkā; LXX adds ‘before you’]. . . .”

Moses: “If your presence [pānēkā] does not walk [pl., hōlēkām], . . . how will it be known whether I have found favor? . . .”

God: “All right, I will do this thing you ask. . . .”

Moses: “Please, let me see your glory [kēbōdeka].”

God: “My goodness [lābî] will pass before you . . . But you cannot see my presence [pānāy].”

Several things occur in this paradigmatic encounter, not least the prophet’s demand that the wilderness trek be aborted until or unless