

## Yahweh among the Gods

In this study Michael Hundley explores the diverse deities of Ancient Near Eastern and biblical literature, from deified doors and diseases to the masters of the universe. Using data from Mesopotamia, Hittite Anatolia, Egypt, the Levant, and non-Priestly Genesis and Exodus, Hundley explains their context-specific approach to deity, which produces complex and seemingly contradictory portraits. He suggests that ancient deities gained prominence primarily by co-opting the attributes of other deities, rather than by denying their existence or inventing new powers. He demonstrates that the primary difference between biblical and Ancient Near Eastern presentations lies in their rhetorical goals, not their conceptions of gods. While others promote divine supremacy, Genesis and Exodus promote exclusive worship. Hundley argues that this monolatry redefined the biblical divine sphere and paved the way for the later development of monotheism and monotheistic explanations of evil.

Michael B. Hundley received his PhD from Cambridge in 2010 and was an Alexander von Humboldt Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich. The author of *Keeping Heaven on Earth* and *Gods in Dwellings* as well as multiple articles, he currently teaches at Central Washington University.

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# Yahweh among the Gods

*The Divine in Genesis, Exodus, and the Ancient  
Near East*

MICHAEL B. HUNDLEY  
*Central Washington University*



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## Preface

The present project has been long in gestation. Begun as an Alexander von Humboldt Postdoctoral research project in 2011, it has been delayed for various reasons. While a postdoctoral researcher, I completed my second book, leaving this volume only half complete. The nomadic lifestyle of a peripheral academic (and some ill-conceived tactical decisions) prevented me from finishing it soon thereafter. Finally, settling as a lecturer at Central Washington University in 2016 gave me the much-needed stability to reengage. Nonetheless, teaching five days a week, three to four times a day sapped me of the mental stamina to make quick progress. At last, and fittingly, I have been able to complete the manuscript during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

It continues my earlier research trajectory, focusing on the intersection of human and divine in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East (ANE). I published a study on conceptions of the divine in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History in 2009, and my first book, *Keeping Heaven on Earth*, considered divine presence in the Priestly Pentateuch in its ANE context. The second, *Gods in Dwellings*, addressed temples, divine presence, and regular service in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Hittite Anatolia, and Syria-Palestine.<sup>1</sup> The present book considers the gods more broadly both within and beyond the temples, examining the gods, their essential and characteristic qualities, the relationship between them as well as the various aspects of a single god, and contact between humans and the divine. Having already assessed Deuteronomy (D) and the Priestly

<sup>1</sup> Hundley 2009; 2011; 2013a. See Hundley 2015a for a summary of Hundley 2013a.

(P) texts, this monograph examines the other major pentateuchal strand, the non-P texts in Genesis and Exodus, again alongside Mesopotamia, Hittite Anatolia, Egypt, and the Levant. I have long been fascinated with the wild and variable presentations of divine figures in these texts and how little they align with modern (scholarly) expectations. This book is my attempt to make sense of the data.

With any book project, authors owe much to those around them. I would like to thank the Humboldt Foundation for giving me the time and resources to conduct much of the research and Professor Dr. Christoph Levin for being such a knowledgeable and amicable host. Thanks are due to *Altorientalische Forschungen*, the *Journal of Theological Studies*, and the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* both for publishing some of the book's components and for allowing me to use them in the composite work. I would like to thank Spencer Allen for his support, his helpful comments on the Mesopotamia chapter even before it became an article, his invaluable monograph, and most of all his friendship.<sup>2</sup> Walther Sallaberger, Jared Miller, and Friedhelm Hoffmann of LMU-Munich each deserve credit for their assistance with the Mesopotamian, Hittite, and Egyptian material.

Special thanks go to Central Washington University for allowing me to stay in the game while being gainfully employed even during the pandemic and giving me the time to finally finish the project. I would like to thank my colleagues and my students for supporting me, especially Professor Lily Vuong for hiring me and being a valuable friend and colleague. Another thank you goes to Beatrice Rehl and Cambridge University Press for agreeing to publish this study. I hope it is worth the wait.

Most of all I would like to thank my family. I am indebted to my parents, Timothy and Virginia Hundley, for their unwavering support and belief in me and to my wife's parents, Charles David and Virginia Susann Jones, for their support of an underemployed son-in-law both emotionally and financially. My wife, Susan Shafer Hundley, in particular, is my guardian angel and the most remarkable person I have ever known. She has followed me all over the world. She knew, loved, and believed in me unlike anyone else, even when life did not go according to plan. In addition to carrying the world on her shoulders, she has also found time to read and edit this work. She has been my strength, my muse, and my soul mate. I owe her more than I can ever repay. Finally, I would like to thank my children, Kaya Elana (twelve, though as she continually

<sup>2</sup> Allen 2015.



reminded me as I wrote this, thirteen in eight days), Evangeline Grace (ten), and Matthew Johannes (eight). They are each wonderful in their own way and, at the time of writing, still live under the fantasy that their father is a hero. Until their minds change and even after, I aim to do all I can to make their belief a reality. In short, my immediate family is more valuable than anything else in the world. It is with them that I want to share life and to them that I dedicate this book.

## Abbreviations

A.	tablets in the collections of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago
ABD	D. N. Freedman, ed. <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . 6 vols. New York, 1992
AEL	Miriam Lichtheim. <i>Ancient Egyptian Literature</i> . 3 vols. Berkeley, 1973–80
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
ÄHG	J. Assmann. <i>Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete</i> . Zurich, 1975
ÄHG <sup>2</sup>	J. Assmann. <i>Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete</i> . 2nd ed. Fribourg, 1999
ANE	Ancient Near East(ern)
ANET	J. Pritchard, ed. <i>ANE Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> . 3rd ed. Princeton, 1969
AO	museum siglum for the Louvre
AoF	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>
ArAn	<i>Archivum Anatolicum</i>
ARM	<i>Archives royales de Mari</i>
ArOr	<i>Archiv Orientalni</i>
Ash.	R. Borger. <i>Die Inschriften Asarhaddons, Königs von Assyrien</i> . Graz, 1956
ASJ	<i>Acta Sumerologica</i>
AuOr	<i>Aula Orientalis</i>
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BaM	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>

## List of Abbreviations

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BD	Book of the Dead
BDB	F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs. <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford, 1962
BetM	<i>Bet Miqra</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BiOr	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>
BM	tablets in the collections of the British Museum
BMECCJ	<i>Bulletin of the Middle Eastern Culture Center in Japan</i>
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
Bo	Inventory numbers of Boğazköy tablets excavated 1906–12
BThZ	<i>Berliner theologische Zeitschrift</i>
BWL	W. Lambert. <i>Babylonian Wisdom Literature</i> . Oxford, 1960
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
CAD	Ignace Gelb et al., eds. <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . 21 vols. Chicago, 1956–2010
CANE	J. Sasson, ed. <i>Civilizations of the ANE</i> . 2 vols. Peabody, 2000
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CD	Cairo Genizah copy of the Damascus Document
CDD	<i>The Chicago Demotic Dictionary</i> . <a href="https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/chicago-demotic-dictionary-cdd-o">https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/chicago-demotic-dictionary-cdd-o</a>
CHD	H. Güterbock and H. Hoffner Jr., eds. <i>The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Chicago, 1991–
COS	W. Hallo and K. L. Younger, eds. <i>The Context of Scripture</i> . 3 vols. Leiden, 1997–2002
CT	Coffin Texts, esp. A. de Buck, ed. <i>The Egyptian Coffin Texts</i> . 7 vols. Chicago, 1935–61
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum (London 1896ff.)
CTH	E. Laroche. <i>Catalogue des textes hittites</i> . Paris, 1971
CUW	J.-L. Cunchillos. <i>A Concordance of Ugaritic Words</i> . Piscataway, 2003
D	The Deuteronomist, Deuteronomy
DDD	K. van der Toorn et al., eds. <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible</i> . 2nd ed. Leiden, 1999
DN	divine name
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls
Dtr	The Deuteronomistic History
EA	The El-Amarna tablets

<i>Ee</i>	<i>Enūma eliš</i>
Emar	Emar texts in D. Arnaud. <i>Recherches au pays d'Aštata: Emar VI/1-4</i> . Paris, 1985-7
ENiM	<i>Égypte nilotique et méditerranéenne</i>
fr.	fragment
GAB	Götteradreßbuch von Assur
GGIG	O. Keel and C. Uehlinger. <i>Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God in Ancient Israel</i> . Minneapolis, 1998
GN	geographic name
HADD	Hypersensitive Agency Detection Device
HeBAI	<i>Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel</i>
HED	J. Puhvel. <i>Hittite Etymological Dictionary</i> . Berlin, 1984-
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IFAO	Institut français d'archéologie orientale
JA EI	<i>Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections</i>
JANER	<i>Journal of ANE Religions</i>
JANES	<i>Journal of the ANE Society of Columbia University</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEA	<i>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</i>
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht van het Vooraziatisch-Egyptisch Genootschap (Gezelschap) "Ex Oriente Lux"</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
K.	tablets in the Kouyunjik collection of the British Museum
KAI	H. Donner and W. Röllig. <i>Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften</i> . 3 vols. Wiesbaden, 1962- (5th ed. 2002)
KBo	<i>Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi</i> . Leipzig, 1916-80
KRI	K. Kitchen. <i>Ramesside Inscriptions, Historical and Biographical: I-VII</i> . Oxford, 1969-90
KTU	M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, and J. Sanmartin. <i>The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places</i> . 3rd ed. Munster, 2013
KUB	<i>Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi</i> . Berlin, 1921-

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LÄ	W. Helck et al., eds. <i>Lexikon der Ägyptologie</i> . 7 vols. Wiesbaden, 1975–92
LAE	W. Simpson, ed. <i>The Literature of Ancient Egypt</i> . 3rd ed. New Haven, 2003
LXX	Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament)
M.	Mari excavation numbers
MARI	<i>Mari, Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
NEA	<i>Near Eastern Archaeology</i>
NedTT	<i>Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift</i>
non-P	non-Priestly
OA	<i>Oriens Antiquus</i>
OEAÉ	D. Redford, ed. <i>The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt</i> . 3 vols. Oxford, 2001
OrNS	<i>Orientalia</i> (Nova Series)
P	Priestly
Pap. or p	papyrus
PE	<i>Praeparatio evangelica = Philo of Byblos: The Phoenician History. Introduction, Critical Texts, Translation, and Notes</i> , ed. H. Attridge and R. Oden. Washington, DC, 1981
PKG	Propyläen Kunstgeschichte (Berlin 1923–6; 1967–82)
RA	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
rev.	reverse
RHA	<i>Revue hittite et asianique</i>
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire de religions</i>
RIMA	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
RIA	M. Streck et al., eds. <i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie</i> . 15 vols. Berlin, 1928–2018
RO	<i>Rocznik Orientalistyczny</i>
RS	museum siglum of the Louvre and Damascus (Ras Shamra)
Rs	reverse side
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAB	<i>State Archives of Assyria Bulletin</i>
SAK	<i>Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur</i>
Samr	Samaria inscriptions from F. Dobbs-Allsop et al., eds. <i>Hebrew Inscriptions</i> . New Haven, 2005
Sanh.	Talmud tractate <i>Sanhedrin</i>

SCCNH	Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SMEA	<i>Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici</i>
<i>Sota.</i>	Talmud tractate <i>Soṭah</i>
STT	O. Gurney and J. Finkelstein, eds. <i>The Sultantepe Tablets</i> . 2 vols. London, 1957–64
T.	Tello
TAD	B. Porten and A. Yardeni, eds. <i>Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt</i> . 4 vols. Jerusalem, 1986–99
TDNT	G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964–76
TDOT	G. Botterweck et al., eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . 15 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–2006
ToM	Theory of Mind
TT	Theban tombs
TUAT	O. Kaiser et al., eds. <i>Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments</i> . Gutersloh, 1982–
TuL	E. Ebeling. <i>Tod und Leben nach den Vorstellungen der Babylonier</i> . Berlin, 1931
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
UC	siglum from UCL's Petrie Museum
UCLAEE	<i>UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology</i>
UF	<i>Ugarit Forschungen</i>
<i>Urk.</i>	K. Sethe et al., eds. <i>Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums</i> . 8 vols. Leipzig/Berlin, 1903–57
VAT	museum siglum of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin
VBoT	A. Götze. <i>Verstreute Boghazköi-Texte</i> . Marburg, 1930
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>Wb</i>	A. Erman and W. Grapow, eds. <i>Wörterbuch der ägyptische Sprache</i> . 7 vols. Berlin, 1926–31
WdO	<i>Welt des Orients</i>
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie</i>
ZÄS	<i>Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZPE	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>