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WHAT IS DEITY IN LXX DEUTERONOMY?

DANIEL O. MCCLELLAN

The book of Deuteronomy provides a number of valuable and unique insights into early Israelite perspectives on the nature of God, his relationship to other divine beings, and the diachronic development of both.¹ The Greek translation of Deuteronomy, understood to be the work of a single translator, redefines and harmonizes, to some degree, the nature of God and his relationship to the deities of the surrounding nations.² Whether as the result of dynamic equivalence, translator exegesis, or a variant *Vorlage*,³ the perspective offered is one of the earliest of developing Hellenistic-Jewish monotheism. This essay will examine some observations related to that perspective which arise from a comparison of the Greek translation to the Hebrew. It will first discuss deity in the Hebrew Bible in general, and Deuteronomy more specifically.

1. Major contributions to the study of the theology of Deuteronomy include Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972); J. Gordon McConville, *Law and Theology in Deuteronomy* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984); Duane L. Christensen, ed., *A Song of Power and the Power of Song* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1993); Georg Braulik, *The Theology of Deuteronomy: Collected Essays of Georg Braulik, O.S.B.* (Ulrika Lindblad trans.; N. Richland Hills, Tex.: Bibal, 1994); Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Alexander Rofé, *Deuteronomy: Issues and Interpretations* (London: T&T Clark, 2002); Nathan MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of Monotheism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

2. For an overview of the relationship between LXX Deuteronomy and its Hebrew *Vorlage*, see John W. Wevers, "The LXX Translator of Deuteronomy," in *IX Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* (ed. Bernard A. Taylor; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997), 57–89.

3. The dynamics which bear on the investigation of the Greek's variations from the Hebrew are discussed in Anneli Aejmelaeus, *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 71–106, 205–22; W. Edward Glenny, *Finding Meaning in the Text: Translations Technique and Theology in the Septuagint of Amos* (Leiden: Brill, 2009); Bénédicte Lemmelijn, *A Plague of Texts? A Text-Critical Study of the So-Called 'Plagues Narrative' in Exodus 7:14–11:10* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

Then it will discuss the dynamics that bear on a comparison of the Greek and Hebrew versions and compare portions of the translation to its parent text and discuss what insights can be garnered from the comparison. Finally, it will discuss what those insights suggest about monotheism in the Hellenistic Period, at least for the translator and some portion of the community of which he was a part.

Deity in Ancient Israel

The ancient Israelite concept of deity was not static by any means, but there is a general consensus regarding its earliest recoverable shape. Research supports the conclusion that Israel drew general outlines of their theology from an ideological matrix shared by surrounding cultures. Cultural and authorial traditions, expediencies, and idiosyncrasies contributed to the uniqueness of each local perspective. A conceptually related textual corpus from outside Israel which has informed our study of early Israelite religion is that of Ugarit, a city on the northern end of modern Syria.⁴ It would be inaccurate to call the relationship shared by the Hebrew Bible and the Ugaritic texts linear, or genetic, given the distance between the two, but there are clear affinities. This has been the conclusion of all recent scholarship which addresses the question, and it was a primary concern for the recent publication *Lesser Deities in the Ugaritic Texts and the Hebrew Bible*.⁵

As a result of the contextualization provided by this cognate literature, recent scholarship has supported viewing the organization of the early Israelite pantheon according to a three or four-tiered hierarchy.⁶ El and his consort

4. For discussion of Ugarit and its impact on the study of early Israel, see Gordon D. Young, ed., *Ugarit in Retrospect: 50 Years of Ugarit and Ugaritic* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981); K. Lawson Younger, ed., *Ugarit at Seventy-Five* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2007). For an English translation of Ugarit's religious texts, see Nicolas Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit* (London: Continuum, 2002).

5. Sang Youl Cho, *Lesser Deities in the Ugaritic Texts and the Hebrew Bible: A Comparative Study of Their Nature and Roles* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007). A great introduction to the issues and early scholarship is Frank Moore Cross Jr., *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 3–75. More recently, see Patrick D. Miller, Paul D. Hanson and S. Dean McBride, Jr., eds., *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period. Volume 1: From the Beginnings to the End of the Monarchy* (trans. John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1994); Patrick D. Miller, *The Religion of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, Kent.: Westminster John Knox, 2000); Ziony Zevit, *The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallaxic Approaches* (London: Continuum, 2001); Mark S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010).

6. Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 65–178; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic*

inhabit the top tier of this hierarchy. El represents the high god and the father of the other deities. The בני אלהים, or “sons of Elohim,” inhabit the second tier. Cho is certainly correct in concluding the sons of Elohim were viewed as sharing a filial relationship with El;⁷ that is, they were the procreated offspring of El and his consort, not simply members of the אלהים taxonomy. A third tier comprising craftsmen or artisan deities is proposed but is not well attested in the Hebrew Bible. The bottom tier comprises messenger deities who were servants to the other tiers. These are the “angels” of the English Bible, although the same underlying Hebrew word can be used in reference to human messengers. Originally it was a functional designation, not a taxonomic one.⁸

The first, second, and fourth tiers are well attested in the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew אל is frequently used in its generic as well as its personal sense in reference to Israel’s high god. That the Israelite El had a consort is supported by textual and archaeological evidence.⁹ Genesis, Deuteronomy, Job, and two psalms refer to the בני אלהים (ה) בני אלים, or בני אלים—the sons of God (Gen 6:2, 4; Deut 32:8–9 [LXX and 4QDeut^a], 43 [4QDeut^a]; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Psalm 29:1; 89:7). Divine messengers, or angels, are also referenced frequently. All three of these tiers were populated by anthropomorphic deities according to both the Ugaritic literature and the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰ The word אלהים can render divinity, deity, God, or gods, and covers all the tiers discussed, showing a rather broad semantic range.¹¹ Moses, Samuel, and David are also referred to in the biblical texts with the word אלהים. The lines that delineated the divine taxonomy, and its metaphorical or rhetorical usage, have not been clearly preserved, if they were ever clearly defined in antiquity.

Texts with multiple historical layers show that these lines were also manipulatable insofar as they served theological expediencies. In Judg 13, when Manoah and his wife are visited by what the text at first calls a מלאך יהוה—the messenger, or angel, of Yahweh—they conclude their discussion with the statement, “We will surely die, for we have seen אלהים.” This fear is an allusion to Exod 33:20, where God warns that no human can see him and live. This

Background and the Ugaritic Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 45–60.

7. See the second chapter of Cho, *Lesser Deities in the Ugaritic Texts and the Hebrew Bible*.

8. Dorothy Irvin, *Mytharion: The Comparison of Tales from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Germany: Verlag Butzon & Berker Kevelaer, 1978), 91–93; Samuel A. Meier, “Angel I מלאך,” *DDD* 44–50.

9. Tilde Binger, *Asherah: Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997); Judith M. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah: Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005).

10. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 27–40.

11. Joel S. Burnett, *A Reassessment of Biblical Elohim* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 2001).

reinforces the identification of the מלאכים with the אלהים for many, but Exod 33:20 makes no mention of dangers involved with seeing מלאכים. The injunction is explicitly on seeing God himself, and specifically his face. At this point there was no threat involved with seeing angels. In Judg 13 the מלאך is most likely an interpolation meant to obscure the notion that Yahweh himself came down and visited humanity.¹² As theological developments pushed God's nature further and further from that of humanity, his visibility and corporeality became problematic, and in many areas were mitigated (see also Exod 14:19–20 [cf. Exod 13:21]; Gen 16:13; 32:30; Judg 6:22–23). The מלאך became, and has remained, a useful literary tool in this regard.

Deity in Deuteronomy

The Hebrew book of Deuteronomy makes no mention of divine messengers, although it does contain multiple historical layers and responds to and renegotiates earlier theological positions in its own way. Deuteronomy 32 is widely recognized as having been composed or compiled by different and earlier authors from the rest of the book. One source of disparity is the Song of Moses' view of deity. In vv. 8–9, as found in 4QDeutⁱ and retroverted from the Septuagint, Elyon is said to have divided up the nations according to the number of the בני אלהים, with Israel falling to Yahweh.¹³ This statement is said by the preceding verses to come down from years long past and points to an archaic distinction between Yahweh and Elyon, or El. That distinction is undermined by Deut 4:19, which anticipates Deut 32:8 but imposes a different interpretive lens. That verse places Yahweh in the role of distributor and has the gods assigned to the nations rather than the nations to the gods. The gods of the nations are rhetorically demoted and are astralized. In placing Yahweh in the position of making the assignments, the author influences the reader toward the desired understanding of Deut 32:8 without having to alter the text itself.

In Deut 32:8–9 the gods are divine stewards over the nations. In v. 43, however, and again from the scrolls, they are called upon to fall down before

12. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis בראשית: The Traditional Hebrew Text with New JPS Translation* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 383; Marjo Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Muenster: Ugaritic-Verlag, 1990), 296; and Meier, "Angel I מלאך," 48.

13. Eugene Ulrich, Frank Moore Cross, S.W. Crawford, J.A. Duncan, P.W. Skehan, E. Tov, and J.T. Barrera. *Qumran Cave 4.IX: Deuteronomy to Kings*. DJD XIV. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 90. See also Paul Sanders, *The Provenance of Deuteronomy 32* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 156–59; Michael Heiser, "Deuteronomy 32 and the Sons of God," *BSac* 158.1 (2001): 52–74; Innocent Himbaza, "Dt 32,8, une correction tardive des scribes Essai d'interprétation et de datation" *Bib* 83.4 (2002): 527–48; Jan Joosten, "A Note on the Text of Deuteronomy xxxii 8" *VT* 57.4 (2007): 548–55.

Yahweh. Still elsewhere, the author levels fierce polemic against these deities. In v. 37 the author has Yahweh remark, "Where are *their* gods? The rock in which they took refuge, who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their libations? Let *them* rise up and help you! Let *them* be your protection!" The gods of the nations are painted as powerless and inconsequential. Vv. 16–17 read, "They made him jealous with *strange things*; with *abominations* they angered him. They sacrificed to *demons*, rather than God; to gods they never knew; new ones recently arrived, whom your fathers, did not revere." The author rejects any degree of relevance for the gods of the nations, even though they are treated as simple divine subordinates in v. 8. Verse 7 may provide a key. In it the author tells Israel to ask their fathers and to hear from their elders the story of Yahweh's acquisition of Israel. What follows is likely a piece of communal memory predating the Song of Moses. This story ends at v. 14, following which the focus shifts to Israel's negligent behavior vis-à-vis their God. This is where the perspective changes. God is referred to as Israel's "Rock," as he was before the interjection, and the other gods are demeaned and marginalized. There is likely a literary seam here, which indicates an additional textual layer.

Outside of Deuteronomy 32 the tone is more nuanced. While Israel is forbidden from worshipping the other gods, the polemic is against the mode of their worship, not the deities themselves. Repeatedly Israel is told that they must not worship Yahweh in the same manner. Deut 12:31 is representative: "You shall not do thus for Yahweh, your God, for every abomination which Yahweh hates, they have performed for their gods." In Deut 29:26 Israel is warned about their ancestors' transgressions: "They went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods which they had not known, and whom he had not allotted to them." They are forbidden to worship the other deities, with two reasons given: (1) the deities of the nations were unknown to their fathers, and (2) the deities of the nations were not allotted to Israel. Again, the Song of Moses is anticipated. The author seems to be trying to reconcile a view of the other deities as Elyon's divine subordinates with the injunction against their veneration. In other places he employs completely different rhetoric, referring to other gods as idols. He is understood by many scholars to be rationalizing Israel's lost autonomy by rearranging the divine hierarchy, with Yahweh at the top and the astralized deities at his feet.¹⁴ Israel's exile is punishment for her infidelity. The author appeals to an important tradition in communal memory,

14. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 16–63; Joel Kaminsky and Anne Stewart, "God of All the World: Universalism and Developing Monotheism in Isaiah 40–66" *HTR* 99.2 (2006): 140.

but recasts it to render it useful to his rhetoric, as many texts from this time period do, particularly in their promotion of Yahweh's universalization.

The Theology of the Septuagint

In recent decades Septuagint scholars have moved away from a view of the translation of the Septuagint as rife with ideological manipulation. More careful text-critical methodologies have contributed to a perspective which sees the Septuagint (and specifically the Pentateuch) as a largely faithful rendering of its *Vorlagen*.¹⁵ As a result, the possibility of isolating the translators' unique worldviews, and specifically their theology, has been called into question. This discussion is ongoing, but scholars are generally in agreement that when translation technique is carefully considered, we can, in limited areas, draw some conclusions regarding theological motivations.¹⁶

The books of the Pentateuch, in their Greek translations, move from less literal to more literal along their canonical order, in which they roughly seem to have been translated. The earlier books tended in more places toward idiomatic Greek at the cost of formal equivalence, while the later books more often sacrificed fluid Greek in favor of Hebraic constructions. The translation of Deuteronomy is demonstrably more literal than Genesis and Exodus. One measurement of this is the ratio of omissions to retentions of resumptive pronouns like οὗ . . . ἐκεῖ, the equivalent of the Hebrew אִשׁר . . . שָׁם, which is not found in compositional Greek. LXX Genesis omits the Hebraic use of the pronoun, indicating a more idiomatic Greek rendering, in 45% of the cases, Exodus in 36%, Leviticus in 25%, Numbers in 13%, and Deuteronomy in 19%.¹⁷ Anneli Aejmelaeus points to another illustration of this trend in "the

15. Robert Hanhart, "The Translation of the Septuagint in Light of Earlier Tradition and Subsequent Influences," in *Septuagint, Scrolls, and Cognate Writings: Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Writings*, Manchester, 1990 (George J. Brooke and Barnabas Lindars eds.; *Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 33; Atlanta, Ga: Society of Biblical Literature, 1992), 341–42; Aejmelaeus, "What Can We Know about the Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Septuagint?" 92; Lemmelijn, *A Plague of Texts?* 103.

16. See, for instance, Jellicoe, *The Septuagint and Modern Study*, 270–71; Olofsson, *The LXX Version*, 17–19; Rösel, "Theologie der Griechischen Bible zur Wiedergabe der Gottesaussagen im LXX-Pentateuch"; Joosten, "Une théologie de la septante?"; Anneli Aejmelaeus, "Von Sprache zur Theologie: Methodologische Überlegungen zur Theologie der Septuaginta" in *On the Trail of the Septuagint Translators* (Leuven: Peeters, 2007), 265–94; Martin Rösel, "Towards a 'Theology of the Septuagint,'" in *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden, eds.; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 239–52.

17. Ilmari Soisalon-Soininen, "The Rendering of the Hebrew Relative Clause in the Greek Pentateuch," in *Ilmari Soisalon-Soininen. Studien zur Septuaginta-Syntax* (Anneli Aejmelaeus and Raija Sollamo, eds.; AASF B.237; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1987), 60.

sharp divergences in the use of δὲ and in the omission of the apodictic conjunction between the first and the latter part of the Greek Pentateuch.”¹⁸ In support of the same conclusion Wevers points to “the much larger number of Hebraisms found in Deut as over against Gen-Exod.”¹⁹ This trajectory may mirror a developing sense that the shape of the biblical text was as authoritative, or more so, than its message.

Space does not permit a more thorough analysis, but this ideal is in play, to some degree, in the translation of Deuteronomy. The translator goes to greater lengths than the translators of Genesis and Exodus to preserve the shape of the *Vorlage*. Most of the texts already discussed are translated with more or less fidelity to the Hebrew. Deuteronomy 32:17, for instance, represents a relatively tight translation:²⁰

Deut 32:17	LXX Deut 32:17
יִבְחוּ לְשֵׁדִים לֹא אֱלֹהִים	ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῶν
אֱלֹהִים לֹא יִדְעוּם	θεοῖς οἷς οὐκ ἤδεισαν
חֲדָשִׁים מִקֶּרֶב בָּאוּ	καινοὶ πρόσφατοι ἤκασιν
לֹא שִׁעְרוּם אֲבֹתֵיכֶם	οὓς οὐκ ἤδεισαν οἱ πατέρες αὐτῶν

The instances of textual manipulation are few, but divergences in a translation as faithful as Deuteronomy are often indicative of some exegetical concern, and some of the more significant divergences are directly relevant to our topic. For instance, where Deuteronomy 4:19 makes reference to the “sun, the moon, and the stars—all the host of heaven,” LXX renders, “the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and any ornament of the sky (τὸν κόσμον τοῦ οὐρανοῦ). From an atomistic point of view this falls within the semantic range of the *Vorlage* (it is the same word used to render צבא in Gen 2:1), but it also shows the complete de-deification of the entities involved.”²¹ Deuteronomy 17:3 has

18. Anneli Aejmelaeus, *Parataxis in the Septuagint: A Study of the Renderings of the Hebrew Coordinate Clauses in the Greek Pentateuch*, (Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae Dissertationes Humanarum Litterarum 31; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1982), 183.

19. Wevers, “The LXX Translator of Deuteronomy,” 59.

20. The clearest divergence is the addition of καὶ in the first colon, which may have been in the *Vorlage*. The same verb renders ידעום and שיערום, but the latter is a *hapax legomenon*. For more on the interpretation of this verse, see Michael Heiser, “Does Deuteronomy 32:17 Assume or Deny the Reality of Other Gods?” *BT* 59.3 (2008): 137–45.

21. This process begins well before the Hellenistic Period, however. On de-deification in the Hebrew tradition of Deuteronomy, see Hadley, “The De-deification of Deities in Deuteronomy,”

the same equivalent, speaking of that person who might serve “other gods and do obeisance to them, whether the sun or the moon or any of what belongs to the adornment of the sky.” They are no longer viewed as deities. The text now seems to reference the worship of non-sentient astral bodies. Where the original author sought to provide a framework for understanding the identity of the “sons of God” nearer the end of Deuteronomy, the Septuagint translator simply presented them as astral bodies. The translator did leave references to divine beings in the Song of Moses, however, indicating little concern for the harmony of the allusion with its antecedent.

Most significant among the divergences is LXX Deut 32:43, cola a–d, which have recently received a lot of attention.²²

4QDeut ^a	LXX Deut 32:43	MT Deut 32:43
הַרְנִינוּ שָׁמַיִם עִמּוֹ	εὐφράνθητε, οὐρανοί, ἅμα αὐτῷ,	
וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לּוֹ כָּל אֱלֹהִים	καὶ προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες υἱοὶ Θεοῦ	
	εὐφράνθητε, ἔθνη μετὰ τοῦ λαοῦ αὐτοῦ,	הַרְנִינוּ גּוֹיִם עִמּוֹ
	καὶ ἐνισχυσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ	

MT only preserves one colon. 4QDeut^a has two, which are widely accepted as more original. וְהִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לּוֹ כָּל אֱלֹהִים, “Let all the gods worship him,” is also found in Ps 97:7. The Greek of Deut 32:43 adds two additional cola to the reading from the scrolls. The Greek rendering of Ps 97:7 is similar to LXX Deut 32:43d, but alters the order a bit, conflating cola b and d, thus προσκυνησάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ, “let all the angels of God worship him.” This is the version found in *Odes* 2:43. Heb 1:6 has this order, but does not have the added definite article.²³

22. Arie van der Kooij, “The Ending of the Song of Moses: On the Pre-Masoretic Version of Deut 32:43,” in *Studies in Deuteronomy in Honour of C.J. Labuschagne on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, (F. García Martínez, A. Hilhorst, J. T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, A. S. van der Woude, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 1994); Alexander Rofé, “The End of the Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32:32)” in *Deuteronomy: Issues and Interpretations* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), 47–54; Martin Karrer, “The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Septuagint,” *Septuagint Research: Issues and Challenges in the Study of the Greek Jewish Scriptures* (Wolfgang Kraus and R. Glenn Wooden, eds.; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 349–53.

23. Some LXX manuscripts have this order and include the article.

The divergences from 4QDeut⁴ in the Septuagint version are unlikely to derive from the *Vorlage*. $\nu\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$ θεοῦ likely renders אלהים. While בני אלהים may seem a more simple retroversion, two considerations mitigate that conclusion. (1) We have good textual evidence for אלהים, and (2) the expansion in translation is easily explained.²⁴ It harmonizes the colon with the translation of Deut 32:8: ἀριθμὸν υἱῶν θεοῦ, “the number of the sons of God,” and it skirts the invective aimed at the θεοί in other portions of the Song of Moses. בני אלהים seems to have been more palatable to the translator and his expected readers than simply אלהים.

The additional cola are also likely exegetical. Deuteronomy is devoid of any mention of divine messengers. The only use of the Hebrew מלאכים refers to human messengers (2:26). The association of angels with the בני אלהים is not found in the Hebrew Bible. As mentioned earlier, the בני אלהים were a distinct tier from the מלאכים, who were divine servants. Their conflation first occurs in exegetical translations within the Greek, like Job 1:6; 2:1; and 38:7. LXX Genesis, likely the first book translated, has υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ at Gen 6:2 and 4 in early manuscripts but ἄγγελοι τοῦ Θεοῦ replaces it in later manuscripts. While $\nu\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$ θεοῦ is the earliest rendering of Deut 32:8, most witnesses render ἀγγελῶν θεοῦ.²⁵ “Angels” is the reading preserved in almost all subsequent allusions to these texts. Jub 15:31–32 explains that God set “spirits” over the nations of the earth in order to lead them astray from following him, but he set no “angel or spirit” over Israel, his special possession.²⁶ Dan 10:20–21 refer to the guardians of the nations of Persia and Greece as “princes,” calling the angel Michael one of the “chief princes” (v. 13). Enoch’s *Animal Apocalypse* (1 En. 10–12) recasts Deuteronomy’s divine stewards as angelic shepherds over the nations who serve to punish Israel. In Clement of Alexandria’s *Stromata*, he asserts “the patronage of angels is distributed over the nations and cities.”²⁷ Similar readings are also found in the Pseudo-Clementine texts and in a number of rabbinic texts.²⁸ What is rare is a reference to these stewards as “gods” or “sons of God,” and where they occur, the context clearly defines them as angels. After the translation of the Septuagint, the vernacular seems to have shifted.²⁹

24. This is also the contention of van der Kooij, “The Ending of the Song of Moses,” 99–100.

25. $\nu\acute{\iota}\omega\nu$ θεοῦ is found in a papyrus from Cairo (848) and in an Armenian manuscript. See John W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Deuteronomy*, (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1995), 513. Others render ἀγγελῶν θεοῦ, υἱῶν Ἰσραηλ, or some slight variation.

26. These “spirits” are the offspring of the Watchers (cf. Jub 10:2–9; Gen 6:2, 4).

27. *Stromata* 6.17.157.5.

28. A few examples are *Recognitions* 2.42; *Homilies* 18.4; *Deuteronomy Rabba* 6:4.

29. For a full discussion, see Darrell D. Hannah, “Guardian Angels and Angelic National Patrons in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity,” in *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings—Origins, Development and Reception* (Friedrich V. Reiterer, Tobias

It would seem the translator of Deuteronomy manipulated the phrase toward a contemporaneous identification of the בני אלהים with angels. The fact that the translator felt it necessary to actually alter the text indicates the identification was not something that would be presupposed by his readership. This may help explain the expanded cola at v. 43. In the early Septuagint manuscripts, Deut 32:8 still read $\nu\acute{\iota}\omega\nu\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$, but at v. 43 the translator added two parallel cola that provided a lens for identifying the $\nu\acute{\iota}\omega\nu\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$. The author likely introduced the parallelism to impose a specific interpretive framework on Deuteronomy's references to the $\nu\acute{\iota}\omega\nu\ \theta\epsilon\omicron\upsilon$. He wanted to make it clear where they fit into the divine hierarchy.

This identification is carried over to Deut 33:2, which is widely agreed to have referred originally to אלים, or "gods," appearing parallel to קדש, or "Holy Ones." Ps 89:6-7 creates the same parallelism between קהל קדשים, "Congregation of Holy Ones," and בני אלים, "Sons of El," explicitly identifying the קדשים with the deities of the Israelite pantheon's second tier.³⁰ V. 8 even references a סוד קדשים, "Council of Holy Ones." In the Ugaritic texts the word appears parallel to 'ilm and is a clear reference to second tier deities. LXX Deut 33:2 transliterates קדש with $\kappa\alpha\delta\eta\varsigma$, perhaps because of confusion with the singular form, and renders the reference to אלים with $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\gamma\epsilon\lambda\omicron\iota$. This reading is also found in later literature. *1 Enoch* eschatologically recasts Deuteronomy 33 and refers to the "Holy Ones" who would accompany Yahweh at Sinai as "angels."³¹ These angels are frequently called "watchers" in *1 Enoch* and other apocalyptic literature, where they also take the place of the בני אלהים from Gen 6:2 and 4.³² The narrative involving their marriage to human women is expanded in *1 Enoch* and in *Jubilees*.³³ 4Q180 1.7, entitled "The Ages of Creation," references "Azaz'el and the angels" who sired children with the daughters of humanity. *Genesis Rabba* 26.5 renders Gen 2:4 with "sons of nobles" and actually curses anyone who transmits "sons of God." The marriage of angels and human women is also referenced in Jude 6; 2 Pet 2:4; and perhaps 1 Cor 11:10.

Niklas, Karin Shöpflin, eds.; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 413-35. See also John J. Collins, "Powers in Heaven: God, Gods, and Angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Religion in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (John J. Collins and Robert A. Kugler, eds.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2000), 11-14.

30. אלים may be the singular אל with an enclitic *mem*, which would be directly parallel to the Ugaritic 'ilm.

31. *1 En.* 1:9; 60:4; Jub 17:11 (cf. Dan 4:13, 17, where the "Watchers," another epithet for angels, are described as "Holy Ones").

32. See Andy M. Reimer, "Rescuing the Fallen Angels: The Case of the Disappearing Angels at Qumran," *DSD* 7.3 (2000): 335-40.

33. See, for instance, *1 En.* 6:2; Jub 5:1; *2 En.* 29:4-5.

Some authors leave this monolatrous vernacular untouched. Aquila renders οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν θεῶν in Gen 6:2. *Deuteronomy Rabba*'s discussion of the Shema uses the word "god" in reference to the portioning out of the nations in Deut 32:8, but those gods are also identified as the angels Michael and Gabriel, and even the sun and the moon. *Deuteronomy Rabba* alludes to Deut 4:19 when it warns, "Do not go astray after one of these angels who came down with me; they are all my servants."

Monotheism in the Hellenistic Period

While it is widely recognized that the "sons of God" became identified with angels at some point in early Judaism, the significance or dating of this process is rarely addressed.³⁴ For the translator of LXX Deuteronomy, there was the God of Israel, and there were his angels, which were subdivided into functional categories. The various tiers of the Israelite pantheon were conflated into the bottom tier. This exalted God far above the other divine beings and asserted his "species uniqueness," to borrow a phrase.³⁵ It also consolidated the gods of the nations and other divine beings into a harmless and inferior taxonomy. I would suggest that it is at this conflation that we find the threshold of Jewish monotheism.

Many scholars today view the crisis of the Babylonian Exile as the catalyst for monotheism.³⁶ Deutero-Isaiah, according to this model, contains the first real explicit rejection of the existence of other deities. Scholars who see intimations of monotheism in earlier periods often see Deutero-Isaiah as the culminating expression of the ideal of only one God. Recently, however, the argument has been made that Deutero-Isaiah's rhetoric functions not to deny the ontological existence of other deities, but only to deny their efficacy and relevance to Israel.³⁷ This rhetoric is little different, qualitatively, from the rhetoric of the book of Deuteronomy. Additionally, we still find numerous references to other gods in later literature. If Deutero-Isaiah is consciously rejecting the existence of any other divine beings, it does not seem to have caught on. Job

34. For instance, Smith, *God in Translation*, 196–97.

35. Michael Heiser, "The Divine Council in Late Canonical and Non-Canonical Second Temple Jewish Literature" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2004).

36. Robert K. Gnuse, *No Other Gods: Emergent Monotheism in Israel*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 131–44, 206–08; Ronald E. Clements, "Monotheism and the God of Many Names," in *The God of Israel* (Robert P. Gordon, ed.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 47–59; and, to a more nuanced degree, Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, 149–66.

37. See, particularly, Michael Heiser, "Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an Assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible," *BBR* 18.1 (2008): 9–15. Against this reading, see Hywel Clifford, "Deutero-Isaiah and Monotheism," in *Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel* (ed. John Day; New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

refers on a few different occasions to the “sons of God.” The Greek translators of Genesis and Exodus took no issue with references to other gods, nor did the Greek translators of Psalms 29 or 82; nor does Aquila at Gen 6:2. The אֱלֹהִים are mentioned numerous times in the Qumran literature, often parallel to the “Holy Ones.”³⁸ Rabbinic literature also occasionally retains references to the gods.³⁹

These authors cannot be said to be operating under a rubric that did not allow for the existence of other deities. Other deities are found throughout Israel’s scriptural heritage, and they can hardly be asserted to be rejected as idols in cases such as Deut 32:8–9, where Elyon gives them stewardship over the nations of the earth. The authors and editors of Second Temple Judaism were comfortable enough with that scriptural heritage to perpetuate and even expand on motifs involving other gods. This comfort likely derives from a view of the sons of God as angelic beings and thus ontologically distinct from God. The first clear hint of this conflation is found in the Greek translation of Deuteronomy and is likely an innovation of the Hellenistic Period.

Conclusion

To answer the question posed in the title of this paper, “What is deity in LXX Deuteronomy?” the translator displays a two-tiered vertical hierarchy of deity. At the top was the God of Israel, fully universalized and uniquely superlative in all his defining characteristics. Far below God in the translator’s hierarchy were the angels, created beings existing to serve administratively between God and humanity. LXX Deut 32:17 refers to “demons, gods which [Israel’s ancestors] did not know.” Demons were fallen angels in the cognate literature, which is likely the perspective here, indicating a dualistic view of this subordinate class of divinity.⁴⁰ This provided for malicious divine beings but also protected God from that dualism.

Deut 32:39’s statement, אֲנִי אֱנִי הוּא, “I, I am he,” is altered a bit in translation. LXX simply reads, ἐγὼ εἰμι, “I am.” As Wevers has pointed out, whereas the Hebrew statement is a matter of identification, the Greek is a matter of existence.⁴¹ The verse continues, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν θεὸς πλὴν ἐμοῦ, “and there is no god except me.” The Hebrew has אֵין אֱלֹהִים עִמָּדִי, “there is no God besides me,” which should be read as a reference to Yahweh’s exclusive relationship with Israel rather than his ontological uniqueness. The Greek is more absolute.

38. It occurs 78 times in the scrolls. A few examples are: 1Q22 4.1; 1QM 1.10–11; 14.15–16; 15.14; 17.7; 18.6; 1QH-a 3.8; 15:28; 18:8; 2.1.3, 10; 24.11; 27.3.

39. For instance, see *Deut R.* on 6:4.

40. See Reimer, “Rescuing the Fallen Angels,” 335–40.

41. Wevers, “The LXX Translator of Deuteronomy,” 89.

Wevers calls it “a clear affirmation of monotheism.” And yet the translator deals twice in this same chapter with “sons of God,” after altering one reference to “gods.” His monotheistic affirmation only holds if he demotes the “sons of God” far enough below Yahweh to be an entirely separate and derivative class of divine being, which is precisely what his expansion in Deut 32:43 seems to accomplish.