

# PSALM 24 AND THE TWO YHWHs AT THE GATE OF THE TEMPLE

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Psalm 24, along with Psalm 15 and others, has long been recognized as a “temple entry liturgy,” a song to be sung on the occasion of the pilgrimage and entrance to the temple in Jerusalem. If we establish that both Psalms 15 and 24 are based on temple entry liturgies, it appears that the pilgrims who would have been singing or reciting them were looking for instruction from the God of Israel, YHWH<sup>1</sup> (Psalm 15), and that YHWH is attempting to enter in at the temple gates (Psalm 24). If we bring in other psalms such as 118, it makes clearer that pilgrims are coming to seek the face of YHWH, are coming in the name of YHWH, and are blessed by YHWH after entrance. Although encountering YHWH in the temple and receiving his blessing is the final objective of the pilgrims, Psalm 24 seems to suggest that YHWH is somehow among the travellers as well, attempting likewise to gain passage through the temple gates. Of great interest for this chapter is the implicit understanding conveyed in the psalm that there were *two* YHWHs.

There is evidence that such an ancient belief existed, generally expressed as the existence of one YHWH who was on or came to earth while the other YHWH was enthroned in heaven. For example, in a Jewish religious text written centuries later, the book known as *3 Enoch*, the patriarch Enoch ascends to heaven, and God makes him an archangel with the new name of Metatron.<sup>2</sup> Enoch/Metatron becomes God’s vice-regent and receives a crown and throne in heaven.<sup>3</sup> The text informs us that Enoch/Metatron bears “the Name”<sup>24</sup> of God and that he is known as “little YHWH” or “the lesser YHWH.”<sup>25</sup>

In this study, I will discuss something of a trajectory of a tradition of two YHWHs — two Gods — a tradition with roots in the rituals of the First Temple. I will touch on some examples from the Hebrew Scriptures that seem to demonstrate a belief in or awareness of the idea of more than one divine being who could be called YHWH. Similarly, I will discuss how human beings were sometimes called or identified with YHWH. This practice was associated with ancient Israel’s ritual system

(as expressed in the biblical psalms and historical narratives) and also in later theology and religious literature (such as *3 Enoch*) that was rooted in earlier practices. I will examine the significance of the idea of bearing “the name of YHWH” and how this permits a subordinate figure, such as an angel or human being, to be identified with YHWH or to represent him. All this helps explain why we appear to be seeing two YHWHs in Psalm 24 and other biblical passages.

### Background

In order to trace the trajectory of the “two YHWHs” tradition, we will begin with passages in the Old Testament that seem to describe two divine beings, both called YHWH.<sup>6</sup> One of the better-known examples is Genesis 19:24: “Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven.” This passage was cited by early Christian apologists as one that testified of two Lords, God the Father and God the Son. Justin Martyr, commenting on Genesis 19:24, said:

When Scripture says: ‘The Lord rained fire from the Lord out of Heaven,’ the prophetic word indicates that there were two in number: One upon earth, who, it says, descended to behold the cry of Sodom; Another in Heaven, who is also Lord of the Lord on earth, as He is Father and God; the cause of His power and His being Lord and God.<sup>7</sup>

Another passage used by early Christians was Psalm 110:1: “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”<sup>8</sup> The Christian historian Eusebius argued:

David also, another prophet, as well as king of the Hebrews, says, ‘The LORD said unto my Lord, sit thou on [my] right hand,’ indicating the Most High God by the first LORD and the second to him by the second title.<sup>9</sup>

It is, of course, natural that Christian apologists would look for passages into which they could read mentions of the Father and Son. However, there were Jews who also understood the scriptures to contain evidence of two divine beings. For example, some Jewish circles accepted a “two powers (divine beings) in heaven” tradition — considered a heresy by mainstream rabbis. The late Alan Segal, in his monograph entitled *Two Powers in Heaven*, argues that this “binitarian” belief was so prominent, the rabbis had to condemn it openly and defend against

it. He explained that the major issues that led to this “heretical” doctrine included the following:

The crucial issues that can be dated early are: (1) a dangerous understanding of Daniel 7:9 f.; (2) dangerous contradictions between the portrayal of God as a heavenly warrior (especially in Exodus 15:3) and the figure of an old man on a heavenly throne assumed to be described in various theophanies (especially Exodus 24:10 f.); (3) A tradition about a principal angel, based on Exodus 20 f., said to be Metatron in the amoraic traditions but whose real significance is that he is YHWH or the bearer of the divine name (using Exodus 23:21 f.).<sup>10</sup>

Although Segal would have us believe that “orthodox” Jews always condemned these ideas as heresies, subsequent studies have demonstrated that this is likely not the case. The great Jewish philosopher Philo, for example, referred to the Logos both as “a second god” and “God” and did not seem to see anything heretical about such a description. James McGrath and Jerry Truex, in their 2004 study on the topic, concluded there does not seem to have been anything excessively controversial about a “second god” or “two powers in heaven” belief among Christians or Jews in the first century CE.<sup>11</sup>

### **Passages Regarding the Angel of YHWH**

Another element of interest found in the Hebrew Scriptures is the figure of the angel of YHWH. Although we would generally not be inclined to equate an angel, a heavenly messenger, with the God of Israel, there are a good number of biblical passages that seem to do just that.<sup>12</sup>

In Zechariah 12:8, for example, we read: “the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.” Here we have two heavenly beings, God and the angel of YHWH, being equated.<sup>13</sup>

Jacob speaks of God (presumably YHWH) as an angel in Genesis 48:15-16: “God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil.”

There is an earlier example that is similar (Genesis 31:11, 13):

And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying,  
Jacob: And I said, Here am I.

... I am the God of Bethel, where thou anointedst the pillar,  
and where thou vowedst a vow unto me.

In Genesis 16:7-13, Abram's servant Hagar flees into the wilderness and is visited by "the angel of the LORD." The angel speaks and makes promises to her as if he were YHWH. After this visitor departs, the narrative explains: "She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me,' for she said, 'I have now seen the One who sees me'" (NIV, Genesis 16:13). The implication is that she understood or believed the angel to be God.

Similarly, in Genesis 22, when Abraham is about to sacrifice his son Isaac, the "angel of the LORD" speaks to Abraham out of heaven but speaks as if he were YHWH himself. In Judges 6, when Gideon sees an angel of YHWH face to face, he thinks he is going to die — a fate usually feared for those who have seen God. Throughout Gideon's conversation with the "angel," the narrative states that YHWH is speaking with him. In Judges 13, there is an angel with a secret name (which he refuses to divulge) who ascends into heaven after meeting with Samson's parents. When they see this, they fear for their lives, saying: "We shall surely die, because we have seen God" (13:22). There are other such examples.

A possible reason for the equation of the angel with God/YHWH in these passages can be understood from a reading of Exodus 23:20-21:

Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way,  
and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware  
of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not  
pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.<sup>14</sup>

Apparently because the angel bears the name of YHWH, he is to be treated as if he were YHWH, and perhaps he was even called YHWH. Because of this factor, it may be difficult for readers of ancient holy writ to know if they are reading about an angel or if the God of Israel himself is being portrayed. Furthermore, it may have been difficult even for early editors, redactors, and copyists, removed from the more ancient origins of the text, to decipher what was to be understood by these figures and their names/titles.

There are some examples not as clear as those previously discussed, but those raise some interesting questions as well. For example, it is complex to sort out who is speaking in the dialogues of the servant and YHWH in Isaiah 50-53 and elsewhere. In Isaiah 50, verses 1-3 clearly indicate that the Lord is speaking, but starting in verse 4, there is an abrupt, unannounced change of speaker. This subsequent figure likely

should be identified as the “servant” of YHWH, but clearly he has been given strength that parallels YHWH’s in a number of aspects. Also, note how the rhetorical questions regarding the strength of the servant’s position parallel those asked by YHWH of his own strength in verse 2. Similarly, in chapter 51:4-5, it is difficult to distinguish whether the Lord or the servant is speaking. This is especially so in verse 3, when the Lord is referred to in the third person. The reference in verses 9-10 to the “arm of the Lord” is likely not referring to YHWH’s literal arm but to the servant figure, as seems to be the case in Isaiah 52:10-15 and Isaiah 53. Compare this idea to the language we see regarding the Davidic king in some of the Psalms, including the idea that the king is Yahweh’s “right-hand” man (see, e.g., Psalms 110:1; 118:15-18).

Another important passage is Deuteronomy 32:8-9, which reads differently in some of the ancient versions,<sup>15</sup> including the oldest known Hebrew rendition found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Some modern English translations have incorporated the Qumran findings. For example, the ESV translation reads:

When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,  
when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples  
according to the number of the sons of God. But the Lord’s  
(YHWH’s) portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.

In the Hebrew, the word for “Most High” is *Elyon*, and “the Lord” is YHWH. These verses may allude to the tradition that *El Elyon*, the Father God, assigned his heavenly sons (angels) as guardians over the nations of the Earth, one son for each nation/people. To his chief son, YHWH, he gave stewardship over Israel (YHWH is the God/Angel of Israel). According to this interpretation, YHWH should be seen as a secondary god, a “guardian angel” over the house of Israel.

### **The Psalms: YHWH as Victorious King**

Several biblical psalms, including the temple entry liturgies mentioned in the introduction (Psalms 15, 24, etc.), depict the earthly YHWH (or the YHWH who has come to earth) as a victorious warrior-king. The idea that we see developed or at least implied in these psalms is that YHWH, the King, has won a great battle over evil, or over the enemies of Israel, and returns in a triumphant procession to Jerusalem. The relevant psalms depict him as leading the hosts of Israel (sometimes the hosts of heaven) in a grand procession into Jerusalem and up to the temple

mount. These “hosts” were likely composed of temple pilgrims who sang the psalms as they journeyed toward Jerusalem and its holy temple.

In Psalm 15, we can understand that the pilgrims attempting to enter the temple courts seek instructions from YHWH regarding worthiness for entering the sacred space. Psalms scholar Craig C. Broyles notes: “In Psalm 15 this question is posed to Yahweh himself, implying it seeks an oracle of instruction or ‘torah.’”<sup>16</sup> Verse 1 contains their petition: “LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?” The list of qualifications that follows (he that walketh uprightly, worketh righteousness, etc.) is apparently YHWH’s response. He instructs the pilgrims regarding the moral qualifications necessary for entrance to the temple.

Psalm 24 presents an almost identical life-setting to Psalm 15, with the pilgrims making a similar request for instruction regarding who is worthy to enter the temple: “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?” Although the list of qualifications is abbreviated compared to Psalm 15, the subsequent steps in the temple entrance liturgy are elaborated. In verse 5 we see the promise that those qualified to ascend to the temple “shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” Ultimately, this is a group of individuals “who seek the face of the God of Jacob” (24:6, as rendered in LXX, Syriac).

Psalm 24:7-10 continues on to provide a dialogue between the procession of pilgrims and the guardians at the temple gates. The participants in the procession apparently have YHWH at their head and request for the gates/doors to be opened so that YHWH and company can enter. The guardians ask questions regarding the identity of the triumphant leader who desires entry. In what follows, I divide up verses 7-10 into a hypothetical dialogue between the members of the procession and the guardians of the gates:

Procession: Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Guardians: Who is this King of glory?

Procession: YHWH strong and mighty, YHWH mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Guardians: Who is this King of glory?

Procession: YHWH of hosts, he is the King of glory.

Broyles points out some interesting details in this exchange:

Verses 7-10 clearly contain a dialogue: those in the procession command the gates to open (vv. 7, 8b, 9, 10b) and the gatekeepers (vv. 8a, 10a).

... The name of God [is] used as a 'password' through the gates ...

In the psalm's closing sections (vv. 7-10) [YHWH] is celebrated under a new name ('new' because it is apparently unknown to the respondents in vv. 8a, 10a), 'the king of glory.'<sup>17</sup>

In several Jewish and Christian texts that treat the subject of ascension to heaven and passing through guardians at the heavenly gates, divine names are used as passwords. Commenting on a text from the Jewish Hekhalot literature, James Davila explains:

The Hekhalot Rabbati contains a long passage in which R. Nehuniah ben HaQanah instructs his disciples on how to undertake a heavenly ascent. ... The practitioner is to carry out ritual actions, recite divine names, give the proper passwords to the angels at each level of the ascent, and he will be welcomed in the divine throne room where he can take his place with the angels to recite the celestial liturgy before the throne of God.<sup>18</sup>

William Hamblin comments on the same body of literature, further specifying that the names of divine beings constitute the passwords that are to be given.

To move between the various sections or hekhalot of the celestial temple, the visionary initiate must pass through a series of doors or gates, each guarded by angels.

As the visionary ascends into heaven, he is often paralyzed with terror and confusion. He is able to progress from level to level only through the assistance of angelic guides who protect the visitor and explain what he is seeing. The assistance of the angels is not guaranteed, however. Some of the angels encountered in the ascent to the celestial temple oppose the

admission of a mortal into the heavenly sanctuary. They will allow the visionary to pass only if he knows the proper passwords — often secret names of the angels — and has the proper tokens or seals. ‘All the different versions of the Hekhaloth lay great emphasis upon the knowledge of various seals (*khotemoth*) described as magical names either of the angels or of aspects of the godhead, that must be shown as passports to the gate-keepers at the entrances to the seven palaces.’<sup>19</sup>

Similar to the Hekhalot texts, the apocryphal Christian text *First Apocalypse of James* 31:2 — 34:20 depicts Jesus sharing with his brother James what James must do after he is martyred in order to pass by the archons/powers that aggressively guard the way into heaven. There are specific ways James is to identify himself when questioned by the angelic guards.

James, behold, I shall reveal to you your redemption. When you are seized, and you undergo these sufferings, a multitude (of archons) will arm themselves against you that they may seize you .... Not only do they demand toll, but they also take away souls by theft. When you come into these powers, one of them who is their guard will say to you, “Who are you and where are you from?” You say to them, “I am a Son, and I am from the Father.” He will say to you, “What sort of son are you, and to what other do you belong?” You say to him, “I am from the Preexistent Father, and a son of the Preexistent One.” ... When he says to you, “Where will you go?” you are to say to him, “To the place from which I have come, there shall I return.” And if you say these things, you will escape their attack.

In a similar passage in the *Gospel of Thomas*, chapter 13, Jesus takes Thomas aside to give him a secret teaching — the teaching consisted of three words that Thomas was not permitted to repeat.

Then he took him aside; he said three words to him. And when Thomas came back to his companions, they asked him: ‘What did Jesus say to thee?’ And Thomas answered them: ‘If I tell you <a single> one of the words he said to me, you will take up stones and throw them at me, and fire will come out of the stones and consume you!’

Judging by the prohibited nature of the three words and the punishment that would follow if he uttered them (see Leviticus 24:16), we should probably understand that the words Jesus gave to Thomas consisted of the Divine Name, perhaps “*ehyeh asher ehyeh*” (“I am that I am”), a form of the name YHWH.

Going back to the Psalms and the notion of two YHWHs, we can summarize the information suggested by our reading of Psalms 15 and 24 as follows:

- The procession of temple pilgrims comes to the gates of the temple and desires instructions from YHWH regarding the qualifications for entrance.
- The worthy will enter and receive a blessing from YHWH. They seek to see the face of YHWH.
- YHWH is apparently with them and also seeking entrance to the temple.
- The name YHWH is used as a password for entry and “King of Glory” is a “new name” also used as a password.
- There is apparently a YHWH with the procession and a YHWH on the other side of the temple gates, providing instructions and waiting to bless the worthy pilgrims.

Additional evidence that YHWH is not only in the temple, the goal of the pilgrims’ journey, but also traveling with the worshippers can be found in several other biblical psalms.

In Psalm 68, which some scholars claim depicts a procession similar or related to the one described in Psalm 24, there is a call for the God of Israel to rise up and march before his people through the wilderness to the sanctuary. The psalm begins with the cry, “Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him” (68:1). This line is nearly identical to Numbers 10:35-36, which tells how Moses used to say this whenever the Ark of the Covenant set out before the travelling tribes of Israel. Psalm 68:4 specifies that this is the God named “Jah” (or Yah/YH, an abbreviated form of YHWH), who is riding upon the heavens before them. Verse 7 states very plainly that the psalmist imagines God journeying with this group: “O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness.” Verses 17-18 similarly specify that YHWH is among the travellers (“YHWH is among them”), along with his myriads of angels with their chariots, as they ascend to the holy place. The participants in this grand

procession are privileged to see God moving among them as they reach the sanctuary. Psalm 68:24-27 states:

24 They have seen thy goings, O God; even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.

25 The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.

26 Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

27 There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.

We see a similar scenario play out in Psalm 132, where the story of David taking the ark into Jerusalem is told. Verse 8 contains a call for YHWH and his ark to “arise,” similar to what we saw in Psalm 68:1 and Numbers 10:35. Psalm 132:1-8 reads:

Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions: How he swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed .... Until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it [presumably the ark] at Ephratah .... We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool. Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.

This psalm depicts the king (David) and his group travelling with the ark up to the Lord’s resting place, presumably his tabernacle in Jerusalem. This is another psalm that bears a number of similarities to Psalm 24, including the idea that the members of the procession can be both traveling to worship the Lord at his sanctuary and traveling with him.

### **The Psalms: The King Who Bears the Name of YHWH**

In some of the psalms we see a variation of this theme. In place of the Lord marching in front of the hosts of Israel as a conquering warrior, we see the Davidic king fulfilling that role, described in similar terms as those used to portray YHWH in the psalms previously discussed. In

Psalm 118, for example, is a sequence that resembles the temple entry liturgy of Psalm 24. A victorious, heroic figure (likely the king), comes in a festal procession (see NIV/RSV 118:27), seeking a blessing at the temple (see v. 26). This figure bears the name of YHWH and asks for the gates of YHWH to be opened so that the righteous can enter. Psalm 118:19-21, 25-26 reads:

19 Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them,  
and I will praise the Lord:

20 This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter.

21 I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become  
my salvation.

25 Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee,  
send now prosperity.

26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have  
blessed you out of the house of the Lord.

Although this psalm is very similar to Psalm 24 and also Psalms 68 and 132, which we have discussed, the imagery here is more specifically of a human figure who comes “in the name of YHWH,” or, in other words, a figure who is called YHWH.

As discussed previously, similar to how we noted that the “arm of the Lord” in Isaiah 51-53 may be a reference to the earthly “servant” of YHWH, in Psalm 118 identification is made between the king and God’s “right hand.” YHWH assists the human king through the power of his “name,” making the king strong enough to defeat his many enemies and trials. We read in Psalm 118:

5 I called upon the Lord in distress: the Lord answered me,  
and set me in a large place.

6 The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do  
unto me?

10 All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the  
Lord will I destroy them.

11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about:  
but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.

14 The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.

16 The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly.

17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

In this and other psalms, we observe the human king invested with power and glory similar to that of YHWH's and given authority by the imposition on him of the "name of YHWH."

Psalms 89 presents YHWH glorified above all other divine beings. There is none other in heaven whose strength and glory are comparable to those of YHWH:

6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty [Heb. "sons of God(s)"] can be likened unto the Lord?

7 God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

8 O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.

However, later in the psalm, YHWH chooses and anoints a human figure who is made king. YHWH gives him power and authority through his "name," and makes him the "firstborn," the greatest of all *earthly* kings. He is given power similar in nature to that of YHWH, described in the first part of the psalm.

19 Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and saidst, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people.

20 I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:

21 With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.

22 The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

23 And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.

24 But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

25 I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand<sup>20</sup> in the rivers.

26 He shall cry unto me, Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

27 Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.

Notice how the Lord strengthens King David. His power is exalted due to the investiture that comes from God's name being upon him. He is given power over the sea and rivers, much like YHWH's own power (see v. 9). Just as YHWH rules over heavenly beings, David is meant to rule over all earthly beings. This psalm depicts David as a "Lesser YHWH" on earth.<sup>21</sup>

Psalm 2 describes the kings of the nations of the earth rebelling and raging "against YHWH and against his anointed." The Lord puts an effective end to this uprising by declaring the installation of his representative, the earthly king, YHWH's son. The psalm (vv. 4-12) reads:

Psalm 45 describes the earthly king in a highly exalted manner that one would expect for a divine being. The king is blessed by God and is greater than other mortals. There is again mention of the right hand.

1 My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

Verses 6 and 7 are striking in their glorified language. In verse 6, the king is apparently being called “God.” Verse 7 then refers to this god’s God, the one who anointed him and exalted him above his fellows.

6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

The historical book of 1 Chronicles records an event that would seem to be related theologically to this deific language in Psalm 45. In 1 Chronicles 29:20-23, King David passes his throne on to his son Solomon. After being anointed, Solomon is seated on the throne in his father’s stead. However, instead of calling it David’s throne, the scripture says that he sat on the throne of YHWH. Verses 22 and 23 read:

22 And did eat and drink before the Lord on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the Lord to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.

23 Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.

Furthermore, verse 20 apparently informs that the Israelite king was worshipped as if he were YHWH. What we are likely seeing here is the idea that the Davidic king represented YHWH — he stands on earth as if he were YHWH.

20 And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of

their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord, and the king.

We can see in biblical psalms such as Psalms 89 and 118, as discussed previously, the idea of the king coming “in the name of YHWH.” Similarly, in descriptions of the ritual activities of the chief priest, the gold plate or crown he wore as part of his headgear appears to have had the name YHWH written on it.<sup>22</sup> If so, this might have indicated to those participating in and witnessing the ceremonies that the high priest represented YHWH in the ritual. For example, when the high priest carried the blood of the sacrifice into the temple or sprinkled blood on the temple precincts, he was acting as if it were YHWH ascending into heaven and so on. Similarly, Metatron, the “Lesser YHWH,” wore the Name of God on his crown — he was said to possess “the name of his master.” We can conclude from this that bearing “the Name” meant that you were to be considered as if you were YHWH, or a “lesser Yahweh.” Later traditions declare that when Moses went up on Mt Sinai, he was vested with Glory and the Divine Name — Philo described this event as Moses having been made god and king.<sup>23</sup>

### YHWH as the King’s Guide

There are a number of texts that depict YHWH as a guide for the king. YHWH guides the king into battle, in the paths of righteousness, into the temple, and so on. We see the same theme with the traditions of the lesser YHWH or the angel of YHWH.

Psalm 73 depicts a royal figure who is plagued by trials and enemies but who finds help when he enters the sanctuary of God. Note how the imagery of the right hand comes up again. Here YHWH holds the seeker by the right hand, guides him with instructions, and then receives him into glory.

22 So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.

23 Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.

24 Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.

25 Whom have I in heaven but thee?

26 and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.

If we analyze the Enoch/Metatron tradition for this theme, we find that Enoch/Metatron, the lesser YHWH, was often depicted as a heavenly guide. Christopher Morray-Jones described the details in these words:

As if the LORD, Metatron functions as the celestial vice-regent who ministers before the Throne, supervises the celestial liturgy and officiates over the heavenly hosts. He sits on the throne which is a replica of the Throne of Glory and wears a glorious robe like that of God. He functions as the agent of God in the creation, acts as intermediary between heavenly and lower worlds, is the guide of the ascending visionary, and reveals the celestial secrets to mankind. He is, by delegating divine authority, the ruler and the judge of the world. He is thus a *Logos* figure and an embodiment of the divine Glory.<sup>24</sup>

In commenting on the writings of Philo, Margaret Barker also looks at the broad tradition of the heavenly guide:

In the material which Philo uses, it looks as though the being whom he calls the Divine Logos, i.e., the Angel of Yahweh, guided the seeker after God into the presence of God where he too achieved divine status and became a son of God. In the parallel apocalyptic tradition the heavenly guide who brings the seeker into the presence of God is also a Yahweh figure; in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (approximately contemporary with Philo) it was the angel Yahoel, and in the later *3 Enoch* it was Metatron, the Lesser Yahweh.<sup>25</sup>

Whether it is YHWH, the angel of YHWH, the lesser YHWH, or Yahoel (essentially, YHWH-El), so many of these texts depict a YHWH figure as the guide for the heavenly traveller, often a mortal prophet, priest, or king. We can deduce from the trajectory of the heavenly traveller in these various traditions that a YHWH figure is guiding seekers through a process that will make them YHWH figures as well.

### **Perpetuation of Ancient Traditions**

Early Jewish and Christian literature presents us with many examples of these traditions perpetuated into the Christian era. The scrolls from Qumran contain a number of texts that preserve these concepts. In addition, the New Testament and apocryphal Christian texts feature many of these elements, often applying them to or seeing them fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

A striking example of the concept of the “lesser Yahweh,” or the human figure who is or becomes a divine being, is found in the Qumran text called “The Self-Glorification Hymn” (4Q427 7, 1QH<sup>a</sup> 25:34-27:3, 4Q471b + 4Q431 I, and 4Q491 11 I). Davila, in “Mystical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” summarizes well the remarkable claims that the author/protagonist of the text presents:

The Self-Glorification Hymn survives in two recensions preserved in four manuscripts from Cave 4 .... In this remarkable hymn, a human speaker boasts of dwelling in heaven and consorting with divine beings. In Recension A he describes himself as one despised and subjected to evil, but his glory is incomparable and he is without equal among the holy ones and gods. He is beloved of God, the King, and has no need to crown himself. In recension B he appears (the text is damaged) to occupy ‘a throne of power in the congregation of the gods,’ unlike the kings of old. His glory is incomparable and he is reckoned among the gods in their abode. The speaker is clearly not angelic or heavenly by nature; his tone indicates that his presence on high and his incomparable divine glory are remarkable, even in heaven. This is an unambiguous case of ascent and enthronement mysticism, in which a human being ascends to heaven and is transformed into a glorious heavenly being who takes a seat on high.<sup>26</sup>

Although not everyone agrees with Davila that the glorious personage speaking in these texts is or was a human figure (some have argued that he is Michael or another angelic being), his view is increasingly the accepted consensus. Note how the speaker describes himself in terms used exclusively to describe Yahweh in the biblical texts. The similarity is unmistakable. See, for example, Exodus 15:11-12:

11 Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

12 Thou stretchedst out thy right hand

Also Psalm 89:

6 For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?

...

8 O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or  
to thy faithfulness round about thee?

If we take passages such as these into consideration, and if the Self-Glorification Hymn does describe a glorified/deified mortal, we may interpret the underlying belief of the author of the hymn as one that allows for a human to become equal or very similar to YHWH. It is also apparent that this notion was not maintained in only a few non-biblical texts during the “intertestamental” period. It is becoming clear that this concept was part of a literary and ritual trajectory maintained and perpetuated over many centuries.

Consider also the drama about the Exodus written by a Jewish playwright known as Ezekiel the Tragedian, writing in Alexandria in around the second century BCE. The play, entitled *Exagoge*, describes Moses as being enthroned on what is apparently the throne of God, and he is given authority to rule in God’s place.

68 I [Moses] had a vision on the top of Sinai of a high throne  
69 tha` t reached the fold of heaven.  
70 On it was sitting a certain noble man,  
71 with a crown and with a large scepter in his  
72 left hand, while with the right  
73 he beckoned me, and I stood before the throne.  
74 He handed me the scepter and told me  
75 to sit on the great throne, and gave me the royal  
76 crown, and he departed from the throne.

Compare this with Moses 1:25, where God gives Moses his power and allows him to act as if he were God. “Blessed art thou, Moses, for I, the Almighty, have chosen thee, and thou shalt be made stronger than many waters; for they shall obey thy command as if thou wert God.” This is very similar to the endowment of power and authority that YHWH gives the mortal Davidic king in Psalm 89 and others whom we have discussed here.

The prime example of these themes coming together in one figure is that of Jesus Christ. Before his resurrection and exaltation to sit at the right hand of God, Jesus was a mortal figure who was seen as the

anointed Davidic king and high priest who came “in the name of the Lord” (John 12:13; Psalm 118:26). Jesus was the Lord (*kyrios* = YHWH). Although he was known as the Lord on earth, he still had to ascend to his Father in heaven. After his resurrection, Jesus was crowned with glory and seated at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33; 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Heb 10:12; 1 Pet 3:22; cf. Psalm 110:1). Jesus is the guide for all those who take upon themselves his name; he leads them into eternal glory, to be crowned and made co-heirs of all that God has (John 8:12; 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7; Colossians 3:1; Titus 3:7; Hebrews 6:17-20; 10:19-22; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 4:17; 2 Nephi 31:16-17; 3 Nephi 12:48; 18:6, 16; 27:21, 27; Moses 5:7-15; Moroni 7:48; D&C 35:2; 84:35-38).

The name YHWH appears to be a title that can be passed from one divine being to another, from Father to Son, as the role of YHWH is filled by a subordinate who has followed YHWH’s lead and has been given authority to represent Him. We read in the *Gospel of Philip*, 54:

One single Name is not uttered in the world, the Name which the Father gave to the Son, the Name above all things; the Name of the Father. For the Son would not become the Father unless he wears the Name of the Father.

The application of these ideas to followers of Christ is brilliantly expressed by King Benjamin in Mosiah 5 as he spoke to his people who had just made a covenant to take Christ’s name upon themselves.

7 And now, because of the covenant which ye have made ye shall be called the children of Christ, his sons, and his daughters...

8 ... There is no other name given whereby salvation cometh; therefore, I would that ye should take upon you the name of Christ, all you that have entered into the covenant with God that ye should be obedient unto the end of your lives.

9 And it shall come to pass that whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ...

12 I say unto you, I would that ye should remember to retain the name written always in your hearts, that ye are not found on the left hand of God, but that ye hear and know the voice

by which ye shall be called, and also, the name by which he shall call you.

### Conclusion

Psalm 24, as it has come down to us, seems to take for granted the notion that there were two YHWHs, or two Gods, who would have had roles in the rituals of the temple described therein. The psalm presents one YHWH as the leader of a temple procession, attempting to pass through the gates and into the temple (vv. 7-10) and another YHWH, the God of Jacob, whose face they were seeking and from whom they hoped to receive a blessing (vv. 5-6; cf. Psalms 15; 118).

In this chapter, we have seen that a belief in two divine beings permeates in varying extents the biblical texts as well as other early Jewish and early Christian literature. Texts like Psalm 110 present the imagery of one LORD in heaven and another Lord who is called up to an exalted position at his right side. The book known as 3 Enoch, a much later Jewish writing, presents the prophet Enoch as having ascended into heaven, being made ruler over the angels, and having been crowned and enthroned in heaven. He is given a new name and is known as “the lesser YHWH” because he is considered worthy to bear the name of God.

In the New Testament Jesus is presented as the true incarnation of YHWH on earth. He is the one who bears the Name of his Father and is the representative of the Father — the one who comes in the name of the Lord. After his death and resurrection, he ascends into heaven to be crowned and seated at his Father’s right hand.

This is a pattern that is reserved not only for Christ but also for all those who choose to follow him. As Christ took upon him the name of the Father and became like him, so also can Christ’s disciples take upon themselves his name and become his sons and daughters, joint-heirs of God with him (Romans 8:17).

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## Endnotes

1. For the sake of clarity and continuity, I will use the Tetragrammaton (YHWH), the four-letter name of Deity found in the Hebrew Scriptures, to refer to the God of Israel, otherwise known as Jehovah or Yahweh.
2. 3 Enoch 4:1-2; 10:3.
3. 3 Enoch 10, 12.
4. Metatron's crown, which is the "Name" by which all things were created, presumably YHWH.
5. 3 Enoch 12:5.
6. Or "LORD" in the KJV and most other English translations. LORD is the English rendering of the Hebrew *adonai* or the Greek *kyrios*, which were often used, out of reverence, as a substitute for the divine name, YHWH.
7. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Ch. 129. See also Eusebius, *Evangelicae Praeparationis*, Book XI, Ch. XIII, p. 532.
8. Although the New Testament and early Christians applied this passage to Jesus, many scholars suggest that the original life setting of Psalm 110 would imply that the Davidic king was the figure who would have been envisioned as having been elevated to sit at God's right hand. See Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to the Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, Mercer Library of Biblical Studies (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998), 102; Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms III: 101-150*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), 112; David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTSup (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 259; LeGrand L. Baker and Stephen D. Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord?*, (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2009), 353ff.
9. Eusebius, *Evangelicae Praeparationis*, Book XI, Ch. XIV, p. 532.

10. Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1977), 149.
11. James McGrath and Jerry Truex, “‘Two Powers’ and Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism,” *Journal of Biblical Studies* 4/1 (2004): 43-71, at 49.
12. An exhaustive discussion of the reasons behind the identification of the angel of YHWH with YHWH is beyond the scope of this study. Please see Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992) for more on this topic. One of the possible reasons is that there may have been a more ancient belief in two deities, a Father (High God) and Son (God of Israel), who later became conflated into one God (YHWH, God of Israel = the one and only Supreme God). The result of this change may be seen in the confusing language discussed in this paper, where both the High God and the divine messenger are known as YHWH.
13. We also see the house of David identified with both God and the angel of YHWH, likely suggesting that the Davidic king was seen as embodying or representing God/the angel of the Lord. This topic will be discussed in further detail below.
14. My Name = YHWH (see, e.g., Exodus 6:3).
15. Most manuscripts of the Septuagint read “angels of God” at the end of Deuteronomy 32:8. Several others read “sons of God.” Two Hebrew manuscripts from Qumran (4QDeut<sup>a</sup> and 4QDeut<sup>i</sup>) have the “sons of God/s” reading. See M. Heiser, “Deuteronomy 32:8 and the Sons of God” (2001), *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 279. [http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts\\_fac\\_pubs/279](http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/279)
16. Craig C. Broyles, “Psalms Concerning the Liturgies of Temple Entry,” in *The Book of Psalms: Composition and Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 249.
17. Broyles, “Psalms,” 252.
18. James R. Davila, “Exploring the Mystical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 444.
19. William J. Hamblin, “Temple Motifs in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Temples of the Ancient World* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 440-477 at 452.

20. Note especially the similarity here between the king's "right hand" having power over the waters in v. 25 and YHWH's "arm" having power over the sea and enemies in vv. 9-10. On the subject of YHWH strengthening the human king and giving him power similar to his own, see also, e.g., Psalms 18, 20, 21, and 144.
21. Compare to Enoch/Metatron being called the "Lesser YHWH," discussed elsewhere in this chapter.
22. See Margaret Barker, *The Great High Priest* (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 46.
12. See, e.g., Philo, *On the Life of Moses*, 1.158. For a detailed study, see Wayne A. Meeks, "Moses as God and King." In *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough*, edited by Jacob Neusner. *Religions in Antiquity, Studies in the History of Religions (Supplements to Numen)* 14, 354-71. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1968.
24. Morray-Jones, "Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition," *JJS* 43:1, 8.
25. Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 121.
26. Davila, "Mystical Background," 438

