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**RETRACTION FOR PLAGIARISM: ROBERTO OURO, “DIVINE  
PRESENCE THEOLOGY VERSUS NAME THEOLOGY IN  
DEUTERONOMY.”**

The editors of *Andrews University Seminary Studies* retract the following article by Roberto Ouro because of plagiarism: “Divine Presence Theology versus Name Theology in Deuteronomy” *AUSS* 52.1 (2014): 5–29.

This article is retracted because the author plagiarized substantial portions from another work, misrepresenting the argumentation of the article as original work. This retraction has no bearing on the validity of the sources from which the article draws.

## DIVINE PRESENCE THEOLOGY VERSUS NAME THEOLOGY IN DEUTERONOMY

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### *Introduction*

Name Theology has long been understood by biblical scholars to be evidence of a paradigm shift within the Israelite theology of Divine Presence. This paradigm shift involves a supposed evolution in Israelite religion away from the anthropomorphic and immanent images of the deity, as found in Divine Presence Theology, toward a more abstract, demythologized, and transcendent one, as in Name Theology.

According to Name Theology, the book of Deuteronomy is identified as the transition point in the shift from the “older and more popular idea” that God *lives* in the temple with the idea that he is actually only *hypostatically present* in the temple. This new understanding theologically differentiates between “Jahweh on the one hand and his name on the other.”<sup>1</sup>

The residual effect of Name Theology is acutely evident in its immanence-to-transcendence scheme. The evidence used to substantiate and sustain Name Theology over the last century may be summarized into two categories: (1) the use of *Name* to indicate the abstracted, or hypostatic, presence of YHWH in the temple; and (2) the apparent *demythologization* of the temple and the ark as found in Nathan’s oracle (2 Sam 7:1-17) and Solomon’s dedicatory address (1 Kgs 8:1-9:9). Here interpreters have identified a repetitive theme: the supposed reinterpretation of YHWH as a transcendent rather than immanent Deity.<sup>2</sup>

Name Theology in Deuteronomy has not, however, gone unchallenged. Those objecting to it have proposed three primary interpretations of the Name formulae, which express (1) the actual Presence of YHWH, (2) YHWH’s taking possession of the sanctuary, and (3) the proclamation of his Name in the cult.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 1965), 1:184.

<sup>2</sup>S. L. Richter, *The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: l’šakēn š’ mō šām in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, BZAW 318 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 7-8, 36-37.

<sup>3</sup>For more discussion on (1), see J. G. McConville, “God’s ‘Name’ and God’s ‘Glory,’” *TynBul* 30 (1979): 162; J. M. Myers, “The Requisites for Response: On the Theology of Deuteronomy,” *Int* 15 (1961): 27. For more discussion on (2), see G. Braulik, “Spuren einer Neubearbeitung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerkes in 1 Kön 8,52-53. 59-60,” *Bib* 52 (1971): 24, n. 3; G. J. Wenham, “Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary,” *TynBul* 22 (1971): 114. For more discussion on (3), see Braulik, 99; H. Weippert, “‘Der Ort, den Jahwe erwählen wird, um dort seinen Namen wohnen zu

A. S. van der Woude challenges Name Theology on two fronts: (1) its presupposition of a universal *šēm* concept in the ancient Near East, and (2) its presupposition of a dichotomy of immanence and transcendence.<sup>4</sup> His focus on linguistic issues and his refutation of the immanence/transcendence paradigm are extremely significant, leading Mayes to conclude that, in the book of Deuteronomy, YHWH is both transcendent and immanent and that the use of the Name has been misunderstood.<sup>5</sup>

More recent critiques, especially those by I. Wilson<sup>6</sup> and S. L. Richter,<sup>7</sup> also challenge traditional Name Theology and call for a reappraisal. Wilson convincingly argues from his understanding of Deuteronomy that, while present in heaven, God also remains present on earth to a greater extent than proponents of Name Theology have allowed. Richter correctly contends that the various Name formulae have been misapplied and demonstrates that the expressions לִשְׂכֹּן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם [*l'šakken šēmō šām*] and לִשׂוּם שְׁמוֹ שָׁם [*lašūm šēmō šām*] are synonymous and should be translated “to place his name there” on the basis of Akkadian parallels.<sup>8</sup> M. Hundley accepts Richter’s suggestion to translate *l'šakken šēmō šām* as “to place his name there,” while allowing for the possibility that it may also connote “dwelling.”<sup>9</sup>

Building on the work of B. Jacob, F. M. Cross, R. de Vaux, and S. D. McBride,<sup>10</sup> Richter argues that *l'šakken šēmō šām*, which occurs seven times

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lassen’: die Geschichte einer alttestamentlichen Formel,” *BZ* 24 (1980): 78.

<sup>4</sup>A. S. van der Woude, *TLOT* 3:1350-1351.

<sup>5</sup>A.D.H. Mayes states: “In fact, however, this introduces a false distinction between Yahweh and his name. The name and the reality signified thereby are not distinguishable; *when Yahweh is said to have caused his name to dwell at a sanctuary, the intention is to indicate the real and effective presence of Yahweh himself at that sanctuary*” (*Deuteronomy*, NCB [London: Oliphants, 1979], 59-60, emphasis supplied).

<sup>6</sup>I. Wilson, *Out of the Midst of the Fire: Divine Presence in Deuteronomy*, SBLDS 151 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1995).

<sup>7</sup>Richter, *Deuteronomistic History*; idem, “The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy,” *VT* 57 (2007): 342-366.

<sup>8</sup>Richter, *Place Name*, 343.

<sup>9</sup>M. Hundley, “To Be or Not to Be: A Reexamination of Name Language in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History,” *VT* 59 (2009): 543.

<sup>10</sup>See, B. Jacob, *In Namen Gottes: eine sprachliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Alten und Neuen Testament* (Berlin: Verlag von S. Calvary, 1903). Benno Jacob strongly contested the magical/hypostatic interpretation of *šēm* YHWH, naming such assessments imaginative and exaggerated. He criticized his predecessors for their inability to assess rightly the idiomatic construction involved. Moreover, he rejected the concept of a deuteronomistic correction in the use of *name*, stating that his colleagues were implicitly following a Wellhausenian developmental scheme in their identification of such a progression. F. M. Cross, “The Priestly Tabernacle,” *Biblical Archaeologist Reader*, ed. G. E. Wright and D. N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1961), 1:201-228;

within Deuteronomy (12:5, 11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2) and is quoted in Ezra 6:12, Neh 1:9, and Jer 7:12, is a loan-adaptation of the Akkadian phrase *šuma šakānu*, while *lašūm šē mō šam* is a calque of the same. She extensively examines this phrase and its near synonym *šuma šatra šakānu* in the Akkadian corpus, finding significant evidence of the former mainly in victory and votive inscriptions and of the latter primarily in building inscriptions.<sup>11</sup> She posits that the phrase “found its way to the northern Levant via the victory stelae of the Old Akkadian and Assyrian kings, and to the southern Levant by means of the Amarna letters.”<sup>12</sup>

In light of these discussions, I will investigate in this article these claims made by proponents of Divine Presence Theology and Name Theology and suggest that the Divine Presence motif, rather than Name Theology, is the focus of the book of Deuteronomy.

#### *Name Theology*

Name Theology is derived from two sets of texts: (1) those referencing YHWH’s Name dwelling (i.e., the cult-place) or presence at the *earthly sanctuary* (e.g., Deuteronomy 12–26, see esp. 12:5, 11, 21; 14:23–24; 16:2, 6, 11; 26:2); and (2) those referring to YHWH’s dwelling or presence *in heaven* (e.g., Deut 4:36; 26:15). While the significance of the cult-place in Deuteronomy was suggested by the end of the nineteenth century,<sup>13</sup> it was G. von Rad who popularized it in a short essay published in 1947.<sup>14</sup>

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idem, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); R. de Vaux, “Le lieu que Yahvé a choisi pour y établir son nom,” in *Das ferne und nahe Wort*, *Festschrift L. Rost*, ed. F. Maass, BZAW 105 (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1967); S. D. McBride, “The Deuteronomic Name Theology” (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1969).

<sup>11</sup>Richter, *Deuteronomistic History*, 130–199.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 199. She draws on several Phoenician inscriptions and especially on the ninth-century bilingual Tell Fakhariyeh votive inscriptions to establish that the phrase did in fact appear in the Levant.

<sup>13</sup>B. Stade, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (Berlin: Grote, 1888), 2:247.

<sup>14</sup>G. von Rad states: “As we see it in Deuteronomy, it [the *Name*] may be established in a particular place, the conception is definite and within fixed limits; it verges closely upon a hypostasis. The Deuteronomic *theologumenon* of the name of Jahweh clearly holds a polemic element, or, to put it better, is a theological corrective. It is not Jahweh himself who is present at the shrine, but only his name as the guarantee of his will to save . . . Deuteronomy is replacing the old crude idea of Jahweh’s presence and dwelling at the shrine by a theologically sublimated idea” (*Deuteronomium-Studien*, FRLANT 58 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1947], 25–30; idem, *Studies in Deuteronomy*, SBT 9 [London: SCM, 1953b], 38–39). Von Rad also states that “the name dwells on earth in the sanctuary; Yahweh himself is in heaven (Deut. 26.15)” (*Deuteronomy, A Commentary*, OITL [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966], 90).

Von Rad's oft-quoted remarks are the classic formulation of Name Theology,<sup>15</sup> and it now commands a wide acceptance.<sup>16</sup> The distinction between YHWH and his Name is fundamental to Name Theology. In contrast to those texts in which the Deity is represented as being localized on the earth, in Deuteronomy it is his Name that is conceived as being thus present, in this case at the sanctuary. YHWH himself is in heaven. The Name placed at the sanctuary is commonly viewed as distinct from, yet related to, YHWH himself, and a variety of terms have been used to describe the relationship between the two. Most commonly, the Name represents YHWH at the sanctuary or is the form of his manifestation there (the Name being understood as a synonym for essence). For instance, "Yahweh's name is . . . the representative of Yahweh himself";<sup>17</sup> "Le Deutéronome entend affirmer . . . que ce n'est pas Yahweh en personne qui habite le Temple, mais qu'il s'y fait représenter par son nom";<sup>18</sup> "we have in these vehicles, which are technically known as *theologoumena*, the 'representations' or 'presentations' of the Deity as he draws near to man in his real yet never fully revealed nature";<sup>19</sup> "Yahweh . . . was represented by . . . His name [Deut 12:5, 11; 14:23 . . .]";<sup>20</sup> "the 'name' [is] the form of Yahweh's manifestation."<sup>21</sup> It has also been proposed that

<sup>15</sup>E.g., see F. Dumermuth, "Zur deuteronomischen Kulttheologie und ihren Voraussetzungen," *ZAW* 70 (1958): 69; McBride, 29; T.N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth: Studies in the Shem and Kabod Theologies*, ConBOT 18 (Lund: Gleerup, 1982), 42; E. W. Nicholson, *Deuteronomy and Tradition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 55-56, 71.

<sup>16</sup>See R. E. Clements, *Deuteronomy*, Old Testament Guides (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 52; H. Gese, "Der Name Gottes im Alten Testament," in *Der Name Gottes*, ed. H. von Stietencron (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1975), 87; F. R. McCurley, "The Home of Deuteronomy Revisited: A Methodological Analysis of the Northern Theory," in *A Light unto My Path*, ed. H. N. Bream, R. D. Heim, and C. A. Moore (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), 308; M. Metzger, "Himmlische und irdische Wohnstatt Jahwes," *UF* 2 (1970): 149; H. D. Preuß, *Deuteronomium*, ErFor 164 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 17; G. Seitz, *Redaktionsgeschichtliche Studien zum Deuteronomium*, BWANT 93 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1971), 222; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomist School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972a), 197. See more recently, e.g., H. D. Preuss, *Old Testament Theology*, 2 vols. (Louisville: WJK, 1995-96), 2:45.

<sup>17</sup>R. E. Clements, *God's Chosen People* (London: SCM, 1968), 78.

<sup>18</sup>E. Jacob, *Théologie de l'Ancien Testament* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1968), 66.

<sup>19</sup>J. K. Kuntz, *The Self-revelation of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 37, emphasis original.

<sup>20</sup>J. Lindblom, "Theophanies in Holy Places in Hebrew Religion," *HUCA* 32 (1961): 92.

<sup>21</sup>Nicholson, 55.

the Name formulae,<sup>22</sup> which are an extension of the Deity, denotes his cultic presence or expresses his ownership of the temple.

Moreover, deuteronomic texts describing the presence of the Name at the cult-place are generally regarded (with von Rad) as correcting the view that YHWH himself resided there.<sup>23</sup> Some scholars, for example, believe that the assertion that the sanctuary is a personal dwelling place of YHWH could be construed as implying the limiting of his Presence to that place.<sup>24</sup> Others relate the introduction of the Name formulae to particular historical events such as the centralization of the cult,<sup>25</sup> the loss of the Ark from the northern kingdom,<sup>26</sup> or the destruction of the temple.<sup>27</sup> However, according to this view, the sanctuary retains its importance for the Israelite worshiper since the presence of the Name is understood as providing indirect access to the Deity himself.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, the presence of the Name at the cult-place is linked to a whole complex of new ideas involving changes in the conception of the Ark (from

<sup>22</sup>Name formulae refer to phrases that incorporate the name (נש) when referring to the deity.

<sup>23</sup>E.g., see R. E. Clements, who state: “[I]n place of the older mythology, by which Yahweh’s abode on earth was thought to be united to his abode in heaven, the Deuteronomists offered a theological concept [...] that of Yahweh’s name [...] set in the place which he had chosen” (*God and Temple* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1965], 94); McBride, 186, states: “According to Stade and most commentators since Name Theology was promulgated as a substitute for the view that Yahweh himself dwelt in an earthly abode. Whether this was the sole or even primary motive informing its earliest usage remains to be seen, but a *corrective intent* is decisive in the way the tradition has been employed by the Deuteronomic historians” (emphasis supplied); Weinfeld, 193, states that “the repeated employment of [the expression “to cause his name to dwell”] is intended to combat the ancient popular belief that the Deity actually dwelled within the sanctuary.”

<sup>24</sup>W. Brueggemann, “Presence of God, Cultic,” *IDBSup* (1976): 681; I. Cairns, *Word and Presence: A Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 127; Clements, *God and Temple*, 100; E. H. Maly, “. . . The Highest Heavens Cannot Contain You . . .” (2 Kgs 8,27): Immanence and Transcendence in the Deuteronomist,” in *Standing before God*, ed. A. Finkel and L. Frizzel (New York: Ktav, 1981), 27; S. L. Terrien, “The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion,” *VT* 20 (1970): 334; G. E. Wright, “God Amidst His People: The Story of the Temple,” in *The Rule of God: Essays in Biblical Theology* (New York: Doubleday, 1960), 72.

<sup>25</sup>O. Grether, *Name und Wort Gottes im Alten Testament*, BZAW 64 (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1934), 35.

<sup>26</sup>O. Kaiser, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1984), 137; Nicholson, 72-73.

<sup>27</sup>McCurley, 310-311; Mettinger, 50, 59-62, 78-79, 133.

<sup>28</sup>Cairns, 127; McBride, 3; Nicholson, 73; S. L. Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 200.

being YHWH's throne to being a mere container for the written law)<sup>29</sup> and the sanctuary (from being YHWH's dwelling place, and, therefore, a place of sacrifice, to being a place of prayer).<sup>30</sup>

It is against this background that the interpretation of the various Name formulae has been carried out. While much of this discussion includes an appeal to other ancient Near Eastern data, in particular the Amarna letters,<sup>31</sup> a closer study of the book reveals that Deuteronomy contains a substantial body of material that has been overlooked or disregarded by most writers on the subject. According to Wilson, there is sufficient evidence for the *earthly* Presence of YHWH in Deuteronomy, especially in chapters 12–26.<sup>32</sup>

By means of an exhaustive study of the parallel pericopes in Exodus/Numbers and Deuteronomy, Wilson convincingly demonstrates that (1) in comparison with its Exodus/Numbers parallels, Deuteronomy does not diminish or remove references to the earthly presence of YHWH; (2) the affirmation of Divine Presence is a clear feature of at least some of the historical sections of Deuteronomy; and (3) in the old legal core of Deuteronomy (chapters 12–26) not only is the localized presence of YHWH at the central sanctuary regularly articulated as the Israelites are commanded to perform their worship “before Yahweh” (*lipnê YHWH*), but these same chapters are replete with the Name formulae.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Divine Presence Theology in Deuteronomy 1*

Within Deuteronomy, there are two groups of expressions that refer to YHWH's earthly Presence. Some occur in the historical sections of the book (e.g., the wilderness wanderings, Holy War, events at Horeb). Others are found in the legal section, where the expression “before YHWH” predominates, but where it is also used to qualify a variety of activities carried out at the “chosen place.” Both groups of expressions are relevant to the subject of Name Theology, but those in the legal section are especially important since they are found in connection with the place from which YHWH is believed *ex hypothesi* to be absent. Both groups of expressions will, therefore, be examined in some

<sup>29</sup>G. Braulik, *Deuteronomium 1–16, 17*, Die Neue Echter Bibel (Würzburg: Echter, 1986), 98; T. E. Fretheim, “The Ark in Deuteronomy,” *CBQ* 30 (1968a): 6; G. von Rad, “The Tent and the Ark,” in *The Problem of the Hexateuch* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 103–124; Weinfeld, 208–209.

<sup>30</sup>R. E. Clements, *Old Testament Theology: A Fresh Approach* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), 68–69; Metzger, 150, 154; Wright, 71.

<sup>31</sup>See esp. McBride, 66–141. He refers to the king having “established his name” (šakan šumšu). Cf. J. Schreiner, *Sion-Jerusalem, Jahwes Königssitz: Theologie der Heiligen Stadt im Alten Testament*, SANTS 7 (München: Kösel, 1963), 163.

<sup>32</sup>Wilson, 12.

<sup>33</sup>Richter, *Deuteronomistic History*, 34.

detail in order to discover whether they include references to YHWH's earthly Presence.

Deuteronomy 1–3 considers accounts in which the Deity is portrayed as present on the earth. For example, Deut 1:19-40 recounts the initial reconnaissance of the Promised Land by the twelve spies, their reporting of the reconnaissance, and the various reactions to their account. This passage contains several references to Divine Presence. The statements in Deut 1:30 about YHWH going ahead of and fighting for the Israelites are generally categorized as Holy War terminology<sup>34</sup> and imply the Divine Presence on the battlefield.<sup>35</sup> They occur as part of Moses' response (vv. 29-31) to the people's murmuring against going up into the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 1:32-33 records the people's lack of belief in YHWH. The reference to the Deity is qualified in v. 33 by a reminder of his localized Presence with them in the wilderness: "who *went* in the way *before you* to search out a place for you to pitch your tents, to show you the way you should go, *in the fire* by night and *in the cloud* by day" (NKJV, emphasis supplied). This is in contrast to v. 31, which, by its use of the verb "to carry," contains a figurative reference to YHWH's activity on the people's behalf in their wilderness wanderings. Verse 33 refers to the fire and the cloud veiling his guiding Presence during that period.<sup>36</sup> In this way, Moses appeals to the people's personal experience of divinely instituted phenomena and indicates the absurdity of their unbelief. Deuteronomy 1:33 is, therefore, a clear example of a heightened emphasis on Divine Presence.

In Deut 1:41-46, YHWH's instruction to Moses in v. 42 ("Say to them, do not go up and do not fight, for I am not in the midst of you," NRSV) is to be passed on to every man who has "girded on his weapons of war" (v. 41, NKJV). Here also the reference to Divine Presence is expressed negatively and here also YHWH's absence is represented as an anomalous state of affairs. Earlier in the chapter, when the people were originally commanded to go up into the land (v. 26), Moses' words (vv. 26-33) indicate that, had they then obeyed, YHWH would have accompanied them onto the battlefield (v. 30). Their rebellion, however, gave rise to a new command, namely, that they turn back toward the wilderness. It is in this situation that the Divine Presence was denied to the expedition. Here also YHWH's absence is temporary and his Presence "in the midst of" the people is regarded as the normal mode of

<sup>34</sup>E.g., see G. von Rad, *Der Heilige Krieg im Alten Israel*, ATANT 20 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1952), 9.

<sup>35</sup>P. C. Craigie, "Yahweh is a Man of Wars," *SJT* 22 (1969): 185; P. D. Miller, *The Divine Warrior in Early Israel*, HSM 5 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 156.

<sup>36</sup>T. W. Mann cites Deut 1:33 as part of the OT terminology of Divine Presence (*Divine Presence and Guidance in Israelite Traditions: The Typology of Exaltation*, JHNES [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977], 253, 257).



his relationship with them. YHWH's absence from the ranks is given as the reason why the Israelites will be defeated in battle: "Do not go up and do not fight, for I am not in the midst of you; otherwise you will be defeated by your enemies" (v. 42). Deuteronomy 1:41-44 refers directly to YHWH's localized Presence by affirming his absence, but in such a way as to imply that this was only temporary and that normally he would be "among" his people.

Deuteronomy 1:41-46 relates how the Israelites were chased by the inhabitants of the land as far as Hormah. Deuteronomy 1:45-46 concludes with a brief account of their return to Kadesh, and in this context there is a reference to the Divine Presence: "Then you returned and wept *before the LORD*, but the LORD would not listen to your voice nor give ear to you" (v. 45, NKJV, emphasis supplied). The people wept after returning to the place from which they had set out originally. It is strongly implied that their weeping "before" YHWH could be done in the Divine Presence and that the one "before" whom they displayed such emotion was being "among" them. Thus, it is clear that Deut 1:41-46 contains a great emphasis on Divine Presence.

*Divine Presence Theology in Deuteronomy 4–5*

Deuteronomy 4:10

Deuteronomy 4–5 (cf. Exodus 19–20) refers to the initial giving of the law on Horeb and contains a variety of references to Divine Presence. For example, Deut 4:10-11 appears to indicate that when the people stood at the foot of the mountain they were in close proximity to the Deity: "especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD (*‘amadta lipnē YHWH*) your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me. . . .' Then you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain" (NKJV; cf. Exod 19:17, in which the narrator refers to the people "meet[ing] God").

There are several features of this passage that indicate that Moses is referring to one particular occasion: (1) the time ("especially concerning the day"); (2) the place ("in Horeb"); and (3) the instructions that YHWH gave to Moses ("Gather the people to me"). In this instance, the passage is intended to be understood *literally*, with the people physically standing in front of YHWH. YHWH himself is regarded as being in their immediate vicinity and thus present at Horeb.

When YHWH tells Moses, "Gather the people *to me*" (v. 4:10), it is strongly implied that as a result of doing so the people would find themselves in close proximity to him. This explanation of YHWH's instruction to Moses is consistent with the purpose for which he wishes the people to be "gathered to him," namely, "and I will let them hear my words." If the people remain where they are, they will not hear what YHWH has to say. But if they are "gathered to him," then they will. The dependency of the

people's hearing of YHWH on where they are located is consistent with YHWH being localized at a particular place, that is, in the fire with which the mountain was burning (v. 11).

Although it is clearly implied by the context of Exod 20:1 that YHWH communicated the Decalogue while on Mount Sinai by references to divine descent (19:18, 20), a warning of the dangers inherent in approaching him (19:21-22, 24), and by the thick darkness "where God was" (20:21), it is only in the book of Deuteronomy that there appears to be explicit indications of Divine Presence speaking "out of the midst of the fire" (4:12-13, 15-16, 33, 36; 5:4-5, 22, 24, 26; 9:10; 10:4).

The expression "out of the midst of the fire" is used to qualify the majority of references to YHWH's audible communication of the law to the people at Horeb. Thus, if YHWH is represented as speaking "out of the midst of" a fire, this would seem to suggest that he was present within the fire. The same could be said when the people are portrayed as hearing either his voice or his words "out of its midst."

Within the OT as a whole, there are six other instances of communication out of or in the midst of something. Four refer to human communications (Pss 22:22 [MT 22:23]; 109:30; 116:19; Ezek 32:21) and two to divine speech (Exod 3:4 and 24:16):

(1) In regard to human communication, Ezek 32:21 (NRSV) states: "The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: 'They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, killed by the sword.'" While many scholars make no clear comment as to the significance of the chiefs speaking "out of the midst of Sheol," those that do indicate that they consider these men to be present there themselves.<sup>37</sup>

(2) In addition, both instances of divine communication involve the Deity calling to Moses out of the midst of a bush (Exod 3:4) and a cloud (Exod 24:16), respectively. In each case, it is generally thought that the writer is affirming, either explicitly or implicitly, the Presence of the Deity within that from which he speaks.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>37</sup>See L. C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, WBC 29 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 137; K. W. Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 216; J. B. Taylor, *Ezekiel*, TOTC (London: Tyndale, 1969), 211.

<sup>38</sup>See R. J. Burns, *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, with Excursions on Feasts/Ritual and Typology*, OTM 3 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1983), 45; R. E. Clements, *Exodus*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 20, 160; J. I. Durham, *Exodus*, WBC 3 (Waco: Word, 1987), 31; W. H. Gispen, *Exodus*, BSC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 52, 241; J. Jeremias, "Theophany in the OT," *IDBSup* (1976): 897; Mann, 154; M. Weinfeld, "Presence, Divine," *EncJud* 13 (1972b): 1016.

## Deuteronomy 4:15-24

In Deut 4:15-24, the people saw no form when they heard the divine words (v. 12). YHWH could have been present within the fire, but invisible or veiled,<sup>39</sup> accounting for why the people saw no physical form.<sup>40</sup> In fact, the message drawn from the people's nonperception of that form most naturally implies that such was indeed the case: "Since you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female" (4:15-16, NRSV).

This prohibition implies that YHWH was actually present at Horeb, but that by visibly perceiving his Presence the people may have been tempted to make an image of him. If YHWH was present within the fire, then such an appeal would provide good grounds for the prohibition since the people's nonperception of his form would render it impossible for them to reproduce an approximate image. The Israelites were, therefore, forbidden either to make images based on the creatures listed in vv. 16b-18 or to worship any of the luminous or flaming heavenly bodies referred to in v. 19. It thus appears that in speaking against the making of images, the writer is supporting the idea of a genuine encounter with the Divine Presence at Horeb.

The response of the people both to the fire out of which YHWH's voice was heard and to the voice itself is consistent with YHWH being present within the fire. Their fear is addressed by Moses: "I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire, and you did not go up the mountain" (Deut 5:5, NKJV). Note that the people's fear of the fire is given as the reason for Moses' standing between them and YHWH, implying that the person of YHWH was in some way associated with the fire. The people were surprised to have survived God speaking with them and hearing his voice (Deut 5:24, 26; cf. 4:33) and they were convinced that continued exposure to the fire and voice would be fatal (5:25; 18:16). Such illustrations appear to be indicative of reactions experienced by those coming into close contact with the Divine Presence. In this regard, J. K. Kuntz notes that "the [OT] theophany is

<sup>39</sup>See J. Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament," *VT*Sup 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 35; R. L. Cohn, *The Shape of Sacred Space: Four Biblical Studies*, AARSR 23 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1981), 50; T. E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, OBT 14 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 95; G. E. Mendenhall, "Toward a Biography of God: Religion and Politics as Reciprocals," in *The Tenth Generation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973b), 212; M. Weinfeld, "Divine Intervention in War in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East," in *History, Historiography and Interpretation*, ed. H. Tadmor and M. Weinfeld (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1983), 145.

<sup>40</sup>See Fretheim, *Suffering God*, 96; J. Ridderbos, *Deuteronomy*, BSC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 85.

inclined to link the approaching nearness of the Deity with a response of fear and dread that is induced in man who attends it.<sup>41</sup> S. L. Terrien concurs, stating that “in Hebraic faith, the fear of Elohim represents man’s ambivalent reaction to the nearness of the holy.”<sup>42</sup>

Hundley proposes that when Deuteronomy says YHWH speaks from the midst of the fire, “we may assume that he is present as much more than a disembodied voice. Other contextual elements also support a real, veiled presence.”<sup>43</sup> He notes that “it seems best to conclude that God is simultaneously both in heaven and on earth. Like the gods of the Ancient Near East who can be present in their various statues and in heaven, YHWH can be present in two places at once, in heaven and in his sanctuary on earth.”<sup>44</sup> Rather than rejecting the traditional theory outright, he brings an important corrective through a reexamination of the name language in context: the Deuteronomistic innovation lies not in absencing God from earth, but in leaving the exact nature and extent of his presence on earth ambiguous.<sup>45</sup>

#### Deuteronomy 5:4

Deuteronomy 5:4 (NKJV) brings a further element of the Divine Presence: “The LORD talked with you *face to face* on the mountain from the midst of the fire.” Few scholars reflect on whether the phrase “face to face” has any bearing on the location of the Divine Presence, though some imply in their more general remarks on vv. 1, 2-5 that YHWH was present on that occasion.<sup>46</sup> But the expression would seem to imply that when it is used to qualify an activity predicated of A in relation to B, then regardless of whatever else might be involved (e.g., when YHWH interacts with a human being face to face whether the human is regarded as in any sense *seeing* the divine visage) A and B are in close proximity to one another.<sup>47</sup>

The form used in the Hebrew phrase “face to face” [*pānīm b’pānīm*] in Deut 5:4 occurs nowhere else in the OT. There is, however, a similar

<sup>41</sup>Kuntz, 43, emphasis original.

<sup>42</sup>Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 378.

<sup>43</sup>Hundley, 538, n. 24.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 539, see also n. 28. Hundley states: “In the Ancient Near East, the gods can be present in multiple forms in multiple places, including heaven and earth, without diminishment. For example, in Egypt, Amun is present in various locales, while Ra is present in various earthly temples, most notably Heliopolis, and in the sun itself.”

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 551-552.

<sup>46</sup>See G. E. Wright, “The Book of Deuteronomy,” *IB* 2 (1953): 363.

<sup>47</sup>Wilson, 76-77.

expression [*panim 'el-panim*] that occurs five times in the OT, each in regard to the Deity, and generally seems to be regarded as having the same meaning:<sup>48</sup>

(1) In Gen 32:30 [MT 32:31], it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the God who Jacob saw “face to face” is the “man” with whom he had wrestled.<sup>49</sup>

(2) The descent of the pillar of cloud in Exod 33:9-11 is generally thought to be YHWH's Presence on those occasions when he is described as speaking to Moses “face to face.”<sup>50</sup>

(3) There are no indications of Divine Presence in the context of Deut 34:10. YHWH's face-to-face knowledge of Moses is frequently understood as an expression of the intimate and unique relationship that existed between them.

(4) That the angel of the LORD who Gideon saw face to face was present is clear from several indications in Judg 6:11-24: (a) the angel of the LORD “sat under the oak at Ophrah” (v. 11); (b) he “appeared” to Gideon (v. 12); (c) Gideon's request to him not to depart “from here” is met by a promise that he would “stay” until Gideon returned (v. 18); and (d) after “touch[ing] the meat and the unleavened cakes” with his staff, the angel of LORD “vanished from [Gideon's] sight” (v. 21).

(5) YHWH's promise in Ezek 20:35 to enter into a face-to-face judgment with Israel has no indication of Divine Presence in its immediate context.

Three of these five OT instances of face-to-face encounters are found in contexts that indicate the parties concerned were in close proximity. Jacob wrestled with God. YHWH descends to the tent that Moses had entered, and the angel touched the food that Gideon set before him. The other two instances do not spell out the idea of spatial proximity, but neither do they rule it out.

Thus, from what is understood by the expression itself, the OT usage elsewhere than Deuteronomy 4–5, and the other references to Divine Presence in its immediate context (“from the midst of the fire . . . I stood between the LORD and you at that time” 5:4-5, NKJV), it would seem that when YHWH is described as having spoken with the people face to face, he did so in their immediate vicinity. This added evidence, therefore, constitutes a further deuteronomic indication of YHWH's localized Presence at Horeb.

<sup>48</sup>BDB, 815.

<sup>49</sup>See W. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation (Atlanta: Knox, 1982), 267; D. Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC (London: Tyndale, 1967), 169-170; M. Maher, *Genesis*, OTM 2 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1982), 189-190; B. Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading* (London: Chapman, 1977), 349, 351.

<sup>50</sup>See B. S. Childs, *Exodus*, OTL (London: SCM, 1974), 592-593; Curtis, 285; G. E. Mendenhall, “The Mask of Yahweh,” in *The Tenth Generation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973a), 59; Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 177-178.

## Deuteronomy 5:5

While scholars generally regard Moses' standing between the LORD and the people in Deut 5:5 as representative of his role as a mediator between YHWH and the Israelites,<sup>51</sup> few have addressed the specific issue of whether the "standing between" is to be understood in its literal, locative meaning. If the verb "to stand" (*'ōmēd*) is taken in its literal sense, then when A stands "between" [*bēn*] two sets of people, it is usually understood that A is in close proximity to both of them. Thus, it is implied in Deut 5:5 that the localization of YHWH is at a site both known to and not far from Moses so that he was able to position himself "between the LORD and [the people]."<sup>52</sup>

Apart from Deut 5:5, the phrase *'ōmēd bēn* occurs only three times in the OT (Exod 14:19-20; Num 16:48 [MT 17:13] and 1 Chron 21:16):

(1) From the amount of spatial information associated with the movements of the pillar of cloud in Exod 14:19-20, it is clear that the "standing between" is intended to be understood in the locative sense ("And the Angel of God, who *went before* the camp of Israel, *moved and went behind* them; and the pillar of cloud *went from before* them and *stood behind* them. So it came *between* the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel," NKJV, emphasis supplied). The two hosts are known to be earthbound and in close proximity to one another, and the change in the pillar's position (from being *before* Israel to standing *behind* them) would suggest that only a literal interpretation is possible.

(2) Aaron's act of atonement in Num 16:48 [MT 17:13]—"And he *stood between* the dead and the living; so the plague was stopped," NKJV—takes place in the people's midst (16:47 [MT 17:12]). Since both the dead and the living can be presumed to have been present at the time (i.e., the plague had already started), then here also the "standing between" is most naturally understood in a locative sense.

(3) Scholars who comment on the "angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven" (NKJV) in 1 Chron 21:16 generally consider him to have been suspended in midair,<sup>53</sup> an interpretation that clearly understands the "standing between" in a locative sense.

It is important to note that in none of these three instances is there any indication that whoever/whatever "stands between" fulfills a mediating role between the other two parties. All three instances of *'ōmēd bēn* are to be

<sup>51</sup>Braulik, *Deuteronomium 1–16*, 17, 49; P. C. Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 148; A. Phillips, *Deuteronomy*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 44; Watts, 207.

<sup>52</sup>Wilson, 79.

<sup>53</sup>See J. M. Myers, *1 Chronicles*, AB 12 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965a), 148; H.G.M. Williamson, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, NCB (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982), 147.

understood literally, and none of them involve any hint of mediatorial activity on behalf of who/whatever stands between.

In Exod 14:19-20, the pillar of cloud “stands between” the two hosts to prevent the Egyptians from approaching any closer to the Israelites (“so that the one did not come near the other all that night,” NKJV). In Num 16:48 [MT 17:13], Aaron “stands between” the dead and the living not to mediate between the two groups, but to do so between YHWH and the living. Finally, in 1 Chron 21:16, the angel “standing between” earth and heaven is in no sense acting as a mediator between humanity and God, but rather as the Deity’s agent of judgment upon Jerusalem.

It has been shown that there is no OT precedent for *‘omed bēn* being understood in the metaphorical sense of mediation. All three instances cited above carry a literal meaning. Therefore, in Deut 5:5, Moses’ “standing between” YHWH and the people is intended to be taken in the same locative sense. The verse thus portrays Moses as occupying the physical space that separates the Israelites from the Deity, who is, thereby, represented as being localized in their immediate vicinity. Thus, on the basis of its usage elsewhere in the OT, *‘omed bēn* in Deut 5:5 is understood in a locative sense. This interpretation is consistent with the other indications of Divine Presence in the immediate context.

YHWH’s Presence on the mountain for his delivery of the Ten Commandments in Deut 4:12-13; 5:4-5; and 5:22 is strongly implied within the verses themselves by the references to his speaking with the people face to face “out of the midst of the fire” and to Moses’ standing between God and the people. This clearly represents a heightened emphasis on Divine Presence in this section of Deuteronomy.

#### Deuteronomy 5:23-27

In Deut 5:23-27, there is a connection between God’s speaking “out of the midst of the darkness” and “out of the midst of the fire,” once again implying God’s immediate Divine Presence on the mountain:

So it was, when you heard the voice *from the midst of the darkness*, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. And you said: “Surely the LORD our God has shown us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice *from the midst of the fire*. We have seen this day that God speaks with man; yet he still lives. Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God anymore, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking *from the midst of the fire*, as we have, and lived? You go near and hear all that the LORD our God may say, and tell us all that the LORD our God says to you, and we will hear and do it” (Deut 5:23-27, NKJV, emphasis supplied).



The Israelites expressed their amazement twice for already having survived hearing YHWH's voice (5:24, 26), and both times indicate that the voice came from the fire. It is only in this account that narrator and people refer to the voice emanating from both the darkness and the fire, thereby implying that the Deity was on the mountain itself and, consequently, giving a heightened indication of Divine Presence.

#### Deuteronomy 5:31

Few scholars comment on the divine instruction to Moses to "stand here by me" (Deut 5:31), though those who do generally see it as referring to the Divine Presence on the mountain.<sup>54</sup> The expression "stand by me" occurs six times elsewhere in the OT (Deut 29:15 [MT 29:14]; 1 Sam 17:26; 1 Chron 20:4; 21:15; 2 Chron 5:12; and Neh 12:40). It occurs once with the same preposition in the Niphal (1 Sam 1:26) and four times in the Hithpael (Exod 34:5; Num 11:16; 2 Chron 20:6; and Ps 94:16). Of these eleven, eight involve a literal "standing by," indicating the physical proximity of the parties concerned. The remaining three are more metaphorical, being found in contexts involving war or aggression (1 Chron 20:4; 2 Chron 20:6; and Ps 94:16).

A number of elements in the context of Deut 5:31 suggest the literal usage of the command "stand here by me": (1) the inclusion of the adverb "here" [*h̄*] implies the locative sense of the preposition; (2) YHWH's promise that he will speak to Moses while the latter "stands by" him is consistent with such an understanding of the phrase as a whole (cf. 1 Sam 17:26, in which David speaks to the men who "stand by" him); and (3) the Deity is represented as being present in vv. 22, 23, 24, and 26. It seems, therefore, that YHWH is instructing Moses in Deut 5:31 to move into close proximity to him, giving a further allusion to the Divine Presence.<sup>55</sup>

#### *Divine Presence Theology in Deuteronomy 9–10*

Deuteronomy 9–10 contains a number of references to the Divine Presence. This account addresses the giving of the two tables of stone upon which the Ten Commandments were written: Deut 9:10 refers to YHWH's giving of the first set of tables (before the incident of the Golden Calf) to Moses, while Deut 10:4 refers to giving him the second set (after that incident). Moses reminds his audience not only that the words inscribed on the tables were those YHWH had conveyed to the people on the occasion of the first giving of the law, but also that they were communicated "from the midst of the fire," indicating that YHWH was present within the fire and thus upon the earth.

<sup>54</sup>Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 166; Ridderbos, 112; Thompson, 120.

<sup>55</sup>Wilson, 88-89.



## Deuteronomy 9:12

In Deut 9:12, YHWH instructs Moses to descend from the mountain as a result of the people's sin in the formation of a Golden Calf: "Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, go down quickly *from here*, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly'" (NKJV). There are nine other instances of the adverb "here" (*mizzeḥ*) (Gen 37:17; 42:15; 50:25; Exod 13:3, 19; 33:15; Judg 6:18; Ruth 2:8; Jer 38:10, as opposed to *mizzeḥ . . . mizzeḥ* ("on one side . . . on the other side," that are used in a spatial and, thus human, sense (excluding 2 Chron 25:9; Neh 13:4; Ps 75:8 [MT 75:9]; Eccl 6:5; 7:18). In these cases, the word means "from here" or "hence"<sup>56</sup> and can generally be shown to have some reference to the location from which the speaker is, at that moment, speaking:

(1) For example, in Gen 37:12-17, Israel sends Joseph to Shechem to find out how Joseph's brothers were faring. Upon his arrival, he asked a man to tell him where the family was pasturing their flock. The man replied: "They have departed from *here (mizzeḥ)*,' for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan'" (v. 17, NKJV). This not only answered Joseph's question, but also (through the use of *mizzeḥ*) imparted the additional information that before the brothers set out for Dothan they were at the place where the man himself now was when giving his reply, that is, at Shechem. That this entails a correct understanding of what *mizzeḥ* implies is confirmed by the earlier part of the narrative, in which it is stated that the brothers did, in fact, go to Shechem, even though they had left by the time Joseph arrived (vv. 12-13).

(2) In the same way, it can be shown that in most of the cases cited above, *mizzeḥ* is used by its speaker to make some point about the place where a person is at the time. Thus, when Zedekiah tells Ebed-melech, "Take three men with you *from here*" (Jer 38:10, NRSV), his use of *mizzeḥ* tells us what we otherwise would not know from the context, that is, that the men in question are to be chosen from near where the king is sitting when he gives the order.

Thus, YHWH's instruction to Moses to "go down quickly from here" (Deut 9:12) implies not only that Moses was on the mountain and that he was required to descend, but also that YHWH himself was present there with him at the time of issuing the command. There is, therefore, evidence for regarding the use of *mizzeḥ* in Deut 9:12 as an allusion to the Divine Presence on the mountain.

## Deuteronomy 9:18, 25-26

In Deut 9:18, 25-26, Moses tells the people about his intervention with God when they had sinned by making the Golden Calf: "Then I lay prostrate *before the LORD* as before, forty days and forty nights. . . . Throughout the forty days

<sup>56</sup>BDB, 262.

and forty nights that I lay prostrate *before the LORD* when the LORD intended to destroy you, I prayed to the LORD” (NRSV). He notes further that “the LORD listened to me at that time also” (v. 19, NKJV), and that “I prayed for Aaron also at the same time” (v. 20, NKJV).

Apart from these three instances in Deut 9:18 and 25 (twice), the verb “to lay” (*np̄l*, Hithpael) is found elsewhere only in Ezra 10:1, again in conjunction with *lipnê* (“before”). There it is used to describe Ezra’s “casting himself down before the house of God” and, when commented on, his prostration is generally taken to have occurred somewhere within the precincts of the temple.<sup>57</sup> The preposition is clearly intended, then, in its locative sense.

The significance of Moses’ lying prostrate “before the LORD” [*lipnê YHWH*] is to be viewed literally since both Moses and the one “before” whom he lays are present in the same place at the same time. Moreover, it is this conclusion toward which vv. 18 and 25 point: (1) the prostration occurs at a particular place (on the mountain); (2) at a particular time (between the breaking of the first tables and their replacement by the second); and (3) while the latter admittedly involves an extended period (forty days and forty nights), the historical particularity of the action does point to its being understood in the literal sense.

#### Deuteronomy 10:1-5

The events associated with the reinstatement of the covenant are dealt with in Deut 10:1-5 (cf. Exod 33:18–34:9 and 34:27-28). In Deut 10:1, there is one reference to YHWH’s localized Presence on the mountain for the giving of the second set of tables (“At that time the LORD said to me, ‘Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and *come up to me* on the mountain,’” NKJV). Thus, YHWH is present there not only for the first giving of the law (9:10 and 10:4) prior to Moses’ first descent (9:12), and during his intercession (9:18 and 25), but also for his return to the mountain to receive the second set of tables (10:1).

After comparing Deuteronomy 1–3, 4–5 and 9–10 with similar passages in Exodus and Numbers, Wilson concludes that, of the thirteen comparable passages, five refer to Divine Presence in both accounts, six do so only in Deuteronomy, and two only in the Tetrateuch.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup>See J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah*, OTL (London: SCM, 1989), 177, 187, 189; F. C. Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 133; F. C. Holmgren, *Israel Alive Again: A Commentary on the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, ITC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 76; H.G.M. Williamson, *Ezra, Nehemiah*, WBC 16 (Waco: Word, 1985), 149.

<sup>58</sup>Wilson, 204.

*Divine Presence Theology in Deuteronomy 12–26*

The expression “before the LORD” [*lipné YHWH*] occurs twenty-five times in Deuteronomy. Sixteen of these are found within chapters 12–26, the main legal section of the book (12:7, 12, 18 [twice]; 14:23, 26; 15:20; 16:11; 18:7; 19:17; 24:4, 13; 26:5, 10 [twice], 13). Although little has been written on this passage in terms of ways in which the Divine Presence may be interpreted, three possibilities have, nevertheless, presented themselves: (1) the occurrences in Deuteronomy 12–26 imply the actual Presence of YHWH;<sup>59</sup> (2) they are equivalent to “at the sanctuary/central shrine” (or similar);<sup>60</sup> or (3) they mean something much less definite.<sup>61</sup>

According to Wilson, the significance of “before the LORD” in Deuteronomy 12–26 must be determined independently of the references to either the divine Name at the “chosen place” (e.g., 12:5, 11) or to YHWH himself in heaven (26:15) for two reasons: (1) the current variety of opinions among scholars as to the significance of the Divine Name in such contexts means that its presence provides no reliable basis for interpreting *lipné YHWH* (reasons are rarely given, and the expression generally appears to be interpreted *intuitively*); and (2) the fact that YHWH is portrayed as dwelling in heaven (26:15) in no way precludes the possibility of his also being present at the “chosen place” since there are instances within the OT (e.g., Deut 4:36 and a number of Psalms) where he is represented as being in two locations at once.

Finally, Wilson outlines the criteria that must be considered relevant is the identification of the *literal* use of the phrase.<sup>62</sup> Thus, for example, the majority of activities described in Deuteronomy (12:7, 12, 18; 14:23, 26; 15:20; 16:11; 18:7; 19:17; 26:5, 10) as taking place “before YHWH” are characterized by two important features: (1) their *location* is stipulated—they are to be carried out at the “chosen place”; and (2) although their timing is never mentioned explicitly, it is clear that in most cases (except for 18:7) the writer has particular occasions in mind. For example, Deut 14:23 describes the specific times that the Israelites will take their tithes and firstlings to the “chosen place” and eat them there. The historical particularity implied by these two aspects of time and place suggests a literal understanding of such activities before YHWH, and thus their occurrence in the Divine Presence.

<sup>59</sup>Craigie, *Book of Deuteronomy*, 217–218, 233, 322; Terrien, *Elusive Presence*, 396, 407, n. 32; Thompson, 168, 197.

<sup>60</sup>R. J. Clifford, *Deuteronomy, with an Excursus on Covenant and Law*, OTM 4 (Wilmington: Glazier, 1982), 77, 105.

<sup>61</sup>Cairns, 145; J. L’Hour, “Une législation criminelle dans le Deutéronome,” *Bib* 44 (1963): 19.

<sup>62</sup>Wilson, 156.

This appears to be true of the majority of occurrences (with the exception of Deut 24:4, 13), which are to be understood in the *literal* sense. Activities described by the expression are intended to take place in the immediate vicinity of the Deity. They, therefore, provide evidence for a belief in his localized Presence at the “chosen place.”

Within the OT, there are three references to an individual eating “before” [*lîpnê*] another human being:

(1) In two cases, 2 Sam 11:13 and 1 Kgs 1:25, the natural inference to be drawn is that the eating is done in the presence of the person concerned, that is, David and Adonijah, respectively.

(2) In the third passage, 2 Kgs 25:29 | Jer 52:33, because of the timescale (“every day of his life”) and the unusual nature of the relationship between the two parties involved (captor/captive), there is some debate as to whether Jehoiachin’s eating “before” the king of Babylon involved his dining regularly in the royal presence.<sup>63</sup>

Two of the three nondeuteronomic instances of a human being eating “before” [*lîpnê*] the Deity occur in proximity to the latter, that is, in terms of the spatial proximity of the parties involved (except for 1 Chron 29:22):

(1) In Exod 18:12, Jethro’s eating “in the presence of God” [*lîpnê hā`ēlohîm*] takes place at Sinai (v. 5). Thus, such eating takes place in the Divine Presence.<sup>64</sup>

(2) In Ezek 44:3, the stipulation that only the prince may sit in the East Gate to eat bread before the LORD is preceded by an indication that once again YHWH has taken up residence in the temple (v. 2). Here also the prince’s eating “before YHWH” occurs in the vicinity of the Deity.

The evidence that the one “before” whom eating takes place is in close proximity to the eater is consistent with the general characteristics of the term *lîpnê YHWH* as it is used in Deuteronomy 12–26, particularly 12:7, 18a; 14:23, 26; 15:20. In these texts, eating before YHWH describes an activity carried out in the Divine Presence.

There are no instances of the significance of rejoicing “before” someone (i.e., a human being) outside of Deuteronomy 12–26. In Deut 12:12, 18b; 16:11, the writer has used the preposition *lîpnê*, which is the main objection to a metaphorical understanding of the activity. This clearly involves the possibility of Israel being understood in the spatial sense of being “in YHWH’s presence” or “in front of YHWH” (i.e., in close proximity to him). The three instances cited of rejoicing “before the LORD” are either stated (Deut 16:11) or implied (Deut 12:12, 18b) as having to take place at a particular location

<sup>63</sup>See, e.g., M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings*, AB 11 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1988), 328-329.

<sup>64</sup>Durham, 245; Gispén, 175; E. W. Nicholson, “The Interpretation of Exodus xxiv 9–11,” *VT* 24 (1974): 87.

(the “chosen place”), a circumstance consistent with a spatial interpretation of the expression. Thus, although none of the OT contexts in which such rejoicing is mentioned contains evidence of the Presence of YHWH, a literal interpretation of the preposition considers the exhortations to rejoice “before YHWH” in Deuteronomy 12–26 as referring to the Divine Presence at the “chosen place.”

Within the OT, there are three instances of Levites standing “before” [*līpnē*] other human beings in the context of ministry (Num 3:6; 16:9; and Ezek 44:11). In none of these cases is there any clear indication as to whether the standing is literal or metaphorical. In addition, there are three other references to Levites standing before YHWH in close association with some form of ministering (Deut 10:8; 2 Chron 29:11; and Ezek 44:15). In these verses, a literal interpretation of “standing”/“standing before” is implied by Deut 17:12 and 18:5. In such contexts, the Levites’ standing is likely to be literal. In two of the instances outside Deuteronomy 12–26, there are independent indications within their immediate contexts that YHWH was believed to be present. There is, thus, a high probability that the standing “before YHWH” is intended to be understood as an allusion to the Divine Presence localized in the vicinity of the Levites.<sup>65</sup>

#### Deuteronomy 18:7

In the context of Deut 18:7, vv. 3-5 concern the Levitical priests (v. 1) who live at the “chosen place” (implied by the reference to sacrifice [v. 3]), and address their responsibilities and payment. They are to “stand to minister in the name of the LORD” (v. 5, NKJV), and in return are to be given the shoulder, cheeks, and stomach of the sacrifice (v. 3) and various first fruits (v. 4). Verses 6-8, on the other hand, are about Levites who live in the towns, but who wish to go to the “chosen place.” Thus, a consideration of the immediate context suggests that, in Deut 18:7, the Levites’ standing is intended to be understood literally, and that to “stand before the LORD” [*hā’ōmdīm līpnē YHWH*] refers to their being in the localized Presence of YHWH. This interpretation is consistent with OT usage elsewhere.

Within the OT, there are five references to an individual standing “before” [*līpnē*] other human beings in a judicial context:

(1) In Num 35:12 and Josh 20:6, 9, an Israelite who killed someone unwittingly was expected to stand before the congregation “for judgment” [*lammišpāt*].

(2) In Num 27:2, the daughters of Zelophehad stand before Moses and their case, in regard to their father’s inheritance, is described as a *mišpāṭān* (v. 5).

(3) Finally, the same term is applied to the resolution (1 Kgs 3:28) of the dispute between the two prostitutes standing before Solomon (v. 16).

<sup>65</sup>Wilson, 166-167, 169-170.

In all five cases, it is clear that the people concerned are in close proximity to those “before” whom they stand.

#### Deuteronomy 19:17

Apart from Deut 19:17, there are no other OT instances of a human being standing before the Deity in a judicial context. There are, however, two references to human beings presenting a case before him:

(1) In Num 27:5, cited above, Moses brings the case of Zelophehad’s daughters before YHWH. Verse 2 mentions the tent of meeting which may provide adequate grounds for Divine Presence.

(2) In Job 23:4, when Job imagines laying his case “before Elohim,” he clearly anticipates entering into the Divine Presence since he refers to “finding him” and “coming to his seat” (v. 3).

It is thus possible that both instances of being before the Deity in a judicial context can be understood as “in the presence of.”<sup>66</sup>

In Deut 19:17, the standing before the priests and judges involves physical proximity to them (“then both men in the controversy shall *stand before the LORD*, before the priests and the judges who serve in those days,” NKJV). Thus, the writer of Deut 19:17 intended to convey that just as the standing is in proximity to the priests and judges, so also it is in proximity to the Deity, thereby representing a further allusion to his Presence. Such a view is consistent with other instances, both of standing “before” humans and of being “before” the Deity in a judicial context.

Within the OT, there are six instances of saying something “before” [*liphne*] human beings (1 Sam 20:1; Neh 4:2 [MT 3:34]; 6:19; Esth 1:16; Eccl 5:6 [MT 5:5]; Ezek 28:9). There are also three instances of speaking before them (Num 36:1; 1 Kgs 3:22; Esth 8:3):

(1) In 1 Sam 20:1, David’s saying something before Jonathan is most naturally understood as being addressed to him since no one else is recorded as being present during their conversation (vv. 1-11).

(2) In Eccl 5:6 [MT 5:5], the worshiper is advised against saying something before the messenger that the unfulfilled vow, which he made at the temple was a mistake, an excuse generally regarded as being proffered to the messenger (whether priest or other emissary sent from the temple to exact payment of the vow).<sup>67</sup>

<sup>66</sup>N. C. Habel, *The Book of Job*, OTL (London: SCM, 1985), 347-348; J. E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 336, 338-339; S. L. Terrien, “The Book of Job,” *IB* 3 (1954): 1080-1081.

<sup>67</sup>J. L. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, OTL (London: SCM, 1988), 117; M. A. Eaton, *Ecclesiastes*, TOTC (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1983), 100; J. A. Loader, *Ecclesiastes: A Practical Commentary*, Text and Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 59; G. Ogden, *Qobeleth*, Readings—A New Biblical Commentary (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987), 79;

(3) In Esth 8:3, Esther's speaking before the king is clearly directed to him, since she falls at his feet and beseeches him with tears.

(4) In Neh 4:2 [MT 3:34], Sanballat's saying something "before" (*lîpnê*) his brethren and the Samaritan army is most naturally understood as being addressed to them (rather than to the Jews) since there is no indication that his sarcasm was delivered within earshot of the Jerusalem wall.

(5) In contrast, the two prostitutes arguing over the fate of the living child (1 Kgs 3:22) speak before Solomon, but address each other since both describe the dead child as "yours." The two prostitutes are able to address each other before Solomon precisely because they are proximate to him. Their speaking before him is to speak in his presence.

#### Deuteronomy 26:5, 13

The choice of the preposition *lîpnê* ("before") in Deut 26:5, 13 to express the Israelite worshiper's saying something in relation to YHWH would appear to point to a literal spatial rather than a nonspatial understanding of that saying "before": "And you shall answer and *say before the LORD* your God . . . [.] then you shall *say before the LORD* your God" (NKJV). That the direct speech of vv. 5-9 is uttered before YHWH, but addressed to someone else requires a literal interpretation of the phrase and, thus, confirms the proximity of speaker and the one "before" who he speaks.

While there are no OT examples of items being set down before human beings, there are two in which they are set down before an artefact (Exod 16:34; Num 17:4 [MT 17:19])<sup>68</sup> and four in which they are set down before YHWH:

(1) In Exod 16:33-34, the jar of manna that Aaron is told to place before YHWH (Exod 16:33) is left "before the testimony" (v. 34).

(2) In Num 17:1-13 [MT 17:16-28], Moses deposits the rods before YHWH in the tent of the testimony (v. 7 [MT v. 22]). Thus, both instances of setting down before YHWH can be understood in the local sense of proximity to YHWH.

(3) In Judges 6, Gideon, in response to YHWH's promise that he would be with him (v. 16), offers to bring out a present and set it before him (v. 18). His accompanying entreaty ("Do not depart from here until I come to you," NRSV) to YHWH, whose identity he appears not to realize, together with the narrator's reference to Gideon's bringing the meat and broth to him under the

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R. N. Whybray, *Ecclesiastes*, NCB (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1989), 96.

<sup>68</sup>In both cases the "testimony." Note that in Num 17:1-13 [MT 17:16-28] it is clear from the fact that Moses deposits the rods in the tent of meeting (v. 4 [MT v. 19]) which houses the testimony (vv. 7-8 [MT vv. 22-23]) that the rods are in close proximity to that "before" which they are placed.



oak (v. 19), indicates that his setting before is conceived in terms of proximity to the one for whom he is providing the food.

Thus, in Deut 26:1, an interpretation of the setting down before YHWH in terms other than literal would be unlikely: (“You shall *set it down before the LORD* your God,” NRSV).

Within the OT, there are two examples of prostration *lipné* (“before”) human beings: (1) Abraham bows down before the Hittites (Gen 23:12); and (2) Absalom bows before David (2 Sam 14:33). Both instances clearly involve the mutual proximity of the parties concerned.

Outside Deuteronomy 12–26, there are five instances of worshiping before YHWH and one of worshiping before foreign gods:

(1) In 1 Sam 1:19, Elkanah and Hannah worship before YHWH. That they do so prior to returning home to Ramah implies that such worship takes place in Shiloh (1:3, 24, 28). Most scholars, in their comments on chapters 1:1–4:1, refer to the Shiloh tabernacle (1:7, 9, 24) as housing the Ark,<sup>69</sup> and to the Ark as in some way connected with the Presence of YHWH.<sup>70</sup> Therefore, Elkanah’s and Hannah’s worship before YHWH takes place in the vicinity of that sacred object and, thus, in the vicinity of the Divine Presence.

(2) In Isa 66:23, YHWH refers to a time when “all flesh shall come to worship before me” (NKJV). Since the context refers to his coming to gather all nations and tongues together (v. 18), it would appear that the predicted worship is envisaged as taking place in his Presence.

(3) In Ezek 46:3, the people are permitted to worship before YHWH at the east-facing gate of the inner court of the new temple. YHWH is represented as having previously entered the building (44:2) and so the Israelites can be seen as worshiping in proximity to him.

(4) In Ps 22:27 [MT 22:28] and 86:9, there are no clear indications of Divine Presence.

(5) In 2 Chron 25:14, Amaziah worships before the gods of the men of Seir. These appear to be idols or images of some kind since he brings them and sets them up. The most natural understanding of his action would be in terms of worshiping in front of them.

Thus, in Deut 26:10, the command is given to “*bow down before the LORD* your God” (NRSV), a style of worship in relation to YHWH that is intended to occur (as in a number of other places) in the Divine Presence.

<sup>69</sup>P. R. Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 20, 23–24; J. G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel*, TOTC (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1988), 65–66; R. P. Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 73; R. W. Klein, *1 Samuel*, WBC 10 (Waco: Word, 1983), 7; J. Mauchline, *1 and 2 Samuel*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1971), 45, 49–50; P. K. McCarter, *1 Samuel*, AB 8 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 59.

<sup>70</sup>Ackroyd, 43; G. B. Caird, “The First and Second Books of Samuel,” *IB 2* (1953): 893; Klein, 32; McCarter, 59.



In view of the strong locative connotations of the preposition “before” (*lîpnê*),<sup>71</sup> Wilson remarks that its use in relation to the Deity appears to conflict with the suggested emphasis on divine transcendence proposed for Deuteronomy 12–26 by advocates of Name Theology. There is the fact that *lîpnê YHWH* is used at all (excluding the two instances in 24:4, 13). If had the writer wanted to affirm YHWH’s absence from the “chosen place,” it is unlikely that he would have used such a preposition before the divine Name (*lîpnê YHWH*) to affirm the exact opposite. Moreover, in six of the fourteen occurrences of *lîpnê YHWH* involving a locative sense, “before” has been chosen in preference to other nonlocative prepositions more commonly used in relation to the Deity. This is the opposite of a context in which divine transcendence is claimed to be of major concern. On the other hand, the use of *lîpnê*, with its strong locative associations, is understandable if the author did wish to affirm that YHWH was indeed present at the “chosen place.”<sup>72</sup>

An understanding of *lîpnê YHWH* in Deuteronomy 12–26 as referring to the Presence of YHWH localized at the sanctuary is coherent with its general characteristics in these chapters. Our analysis has, therefore, showed that God is represented as being present *on the earth* not only in the context of the Wilderness Wanderings and Holy War, but also in that of the cult, and at the very place at which the divine Name is known to be present. Thus, there is no support for the view that Deuteronomy, whether in its historical sections (especially those dealing with the Wilderness Wanderings, Holy War, or events at Horeb) or in its legal section (particularly where it has to do with the cult), has eliminated the Deity from the earthly sphere. Our studies have shown that Deuteronomy’s presentation of the Horeb section reveals no such emphasis on divine transcendence. On the contrary, its allusions to the *Divine Presence on the earth* are very numerous.

In sum, in sanctuary / temple contexts, *lîpnê YHWH* is a term of location defined with reference to the Deity, but not specifying distance from the Divine Presence within the holy precincts.<sup>73</sup>

#### *Conclusion*

Divine Presence is clearly referred to in Deuteronomy. In the historical sections, it is expressed in a variety of ways. Such usage indicates that the author of Deuteronomy could not have been committed to the idea of a

<sup>71</sup>BDB, 816, states that “the most general word for *in the presence of, before*” (emphasis original).

<sup>72</sup>Wilson, 195.

<sup>73</sup>See R. E. Gane, “‘Bread of the Presence’ and Creator-in-Residence,” *VT* 42 (1992): 181; M. Haran, *Temples and Temple-Service in Ancient Israel: An Inquiry into Biblical Cult Phenomena and the Historical Setting of the Priestly School* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1978, 1985), 26, n. 24.

solely transcendent Deity. In the words of T. Fretheim, “it is clear that the Deuteronomists did not think that the only way that God could be present among his people was by means of his name. Such references to God’s presence are found not only in Deuteronomy, but also in the introduction to the Deuteronomistic historical work.”<sup>74</sup> G. J. Wenham concurs, noting that “it seems that Deuteronomy regards God as present in heaven and in His sanctuary.”<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, the available evidence that “before YHWH” (*lîpne YHWH*) refers to the proximate Presence of the Deity at the “chosen place” in the legal section (Deuteronomy 12–26) tends to support it, and no convincing arguments have been put forward against such an interpretation. Thus, the claim that the deuteronomic cult envisages YHWH as being *only* in heaven is a reductionist view and not supported by a careful exegetical and theological study of the deuteronomic texts. Therefore, the existence in Deuteronomy of a thoroughgoing Name Theology as traditionally defined appears to look unlikely. Our studies have shown that Deuteronomy’s presentation of the Horeb section reveals no such emphasis on divine transcendence. On the contrary, its allusions to the *Divine Presence on the earth* are numerous.

<sup>74</sup>Fretheim, *Ark Deuteronomy*, 7.

<sup>75</sup>Wenham, *Deuteronomy Central Sanctuary*, 113.