

The Divine Council at Ugarit and in Canaanite / Phoenician sources

El (also Elyon outside Ugarit)
(ultimate high sovereign)

**Baal
(The Divine Vice Regent)**

Vice-regent of El; the “ruler / king of the gods”; the “Most High” (*’ly*); “deputy” or “regent” (<y>*tr*). He is a son of El, brother to El and Athirat’s other 70 sons. The vice-regency was fought for among the sons of El, and so the vice regent is a created son of El who acts as the special agent of El – fights his battles and rules the gods as appointed authority over the other lower ranking divine rulers of the earth, the sons / princes of El.

The 70 sons of El (and Athirat, his wife)

Referred to as “princes”; “judges” [“rulers”]; “kings” (cf. Handy and Pardee re. the “many *mlkm*” issue), “stars”; and “sons”. This group, with El and Athirat, constitute the “council proper” - the royal house of the heavens as it were.

These many “kings” (*mlkm*) had geographical rule

The *ml’km*

These are part of the council at large, but not the council “proper” since they are not sons of El. They are referred to as gods, though. They take orders and serve El and the higher authorities. They are the “council staff.”

The Divine Council in Pre-Exilic Israel

Yahweh
(to be identified with both El and Baal)

Divine Vice Regent

(a hypostasis of Yahweh; his essence brought forth as an independent, but not autonomous, being)

- The Name (Psa 20:1; 54:1; 44:5; Deu 12:5,11; 16:6, 11; 1Ki 8:1-19 [[links the Glory Cloud and the Name](#)]; 2Ch 20:9)
- The Word (Jer 1; 1Sa 3)
- The Glory (Exo 16:9; 24:9ff.; 40:34 [[linking the glory and the cloud](#) – see below])
- The “Presence” with whom certain people speak “face to face” (Gen 32:30 [cf. the context of wrestling with the elohim / angel; cp. Hos 12:4-5 Heb]; Exo 33:11; Deu 5:4; Num 14:14; Jdg 6:22)
- ? Wisdom and the Spirit are independent grammatically (conceptually?) feminine figures. Wisdom is created or brought forth prior to the creation of the stars [= sons of God] in Prov 8:22ff., and the Spirit may be hypostasized in the Hebrew Bible in Isa 63:1-11. This is not Christian trinity, but interchange with Yahweh as are the other hypostases (and the NT itself may suggest this as well – cf. Acts 8:26-29; 10:19-22)

The hypostasis of Yahweh at times took human form, and was difficult (if not impossible) to clearly distinguish from Yahweh:

- The “Angel of Yahweh” in whom was the Name (Exo. 23:20-23; cf. Gen 48:15-16; Exo 13:21; 14:19, 24; 32:34; 34:5; Jdg 2:1-3; cp. Gen 32:24, 30 and Hos 12:4-5 [Heb]; [both Yahweh and the Angel occupy the cloud and are thus conceptually interchanged](#)). See also Exo 3:1-3; Josh 5:13-15; cp. Num 22:23; Exo 15:3). [If, as virtually all scholars agree, the Cloud and the Name are hypostases, then so is the Angel of Yahweh.](#)
- The “glorious man” on God’s throne (Ezek 1:26ff.; Exo 24:9ff., 33:18; 34:5; Isa 6)
- The “cloud witness” who guarantees Yahweh’s covenant with David (Psa 89:38-39 [Heb])

The sons of God

Called “sons of the Most High” and “elohim” in Psa 82; “princes”; “stars” (Job 38:7-8) and “stars of El” (Isa 14:12-15). They “judge” the 70 nations, exercising geographical rule over them (Deut 4:19-20; 32:8-9; Dan 10)

The *ml’km*

The term is typically translated “angels.” They fulfill the same servant roles as Ugarit / Canaan and are not royal sons of Yahweh-El. They may be gods, as at Ugarit, in which case my thesis gains strength (cf. Gen 28:12ff.; cp. Gen 32 (esp. vv. 24-30; 35:1-9 [the God / gods appearing interchange]).

The Divine Council in Post-Exilic Israel / Second Temple Literature

Yahweh

Divine Vice Regent

(The hypostasis of Yahweh idea is preserved and perpetuated through descriptions of a second deity level being who is God’s chief agent – see Daniel, Qumran, Philo, and the idea of the Spirit as the Presence of Yahweh). For example, Son of Man in Daniel 7:9ff.; Melchizedek in 11QMelch; the Logos. At Qumran the vice-regent takes on a more apparent priestly / intercessory role (cf. Baal as intercessor and the Angel of Yahweh’s power to withhold forgiveness of sins). “Sons of God” and “gods” are still used in descriptions of the council (175 such plurals at Qumran). As Segal points out, after the second century C.E., a number of the verses to the left were forbidden reading without the assistance of one’s rabbi since they taught the idea of a second power in heaven. Prior to that time, the second power was not considered a heresy. Second Temple literature made a careful distinction between Yahweh and the second occupant of heaven’s throne (or between the cherubim) as Yahweh’s hypostasized Presence. This person was not a competitor to Yahweh, since he *was* Yahweh in anthropomorphic form. Yet he was not Yahweh since he obeyed Yahweh.

The sons of God

The previous nomenclature is retained, especially at Qumran. It is also supplemented by terms like “Watchers”; “archangel”

The *ml’km*

“Angel” is used as an overlapping term in Second Temple lit for Watchers and archangels, which may mean a blurring of categories. More likely, in view of the retention of the “Deut 4 / 32 worldview”—that the nations have ruling deities assigned by Yahweh—the word took on a purely functional meaning. That is, *any* member of the heavenly host is a messenger (*ml’k*) of Yahweh. If the “angels of God” of Gen 28 / 35 are gods, this prompts a new (monolatrous) perspective of the “geographical ruling deity” language (“e.g., “dominions”; “archai”; and “thrones”) in the NT and early Jewish material.

