

Adopted from the cultural tradition of the Ancient Near East, the heavenly council imagery is used in the Old Testament body as a literary theme in the shape of a background image, or eikon, to support the force of the Divine statement. More developed descriptions of this minimized image are evidenced in mythological fragments of Ugaritic Baal poetry, in the Mesopotamian epic of Enuma eliš, Etana, Nergal and Ereškigal, as well as in the combined text-picture ritual literature of Egyptian necropolises. The Divine Sovereign is pictured sitting on throne among the council of his kin. The obvious judgment character of these scenes suggests the same implicit action in process in the Old Testament image. God's council sits permanently, in suprahistorical dimension, viewed through metaphor and analogy. From there the Divine statement is transmitted to a historical performer of a role defined and entrusted to him by God in His ultimate plan. The figure of God is thus shown as that of a supreme ruler and judge. The heavenly council stands in silent consent to His decision. The judged one is the earthly king in his responsibility to the Lord of the universe for carrying out administration of the land. The prophetic theology of history sees the judgment passed on Israel – God's people (Isaiah) while wisdom (Job) describes the trial of the rebelling individual, who questions divine order as such. Accusing Job of hypocrisy, Satan the prosecutor defines religion in materialistic terms as *do ut des* enterprise. Outside material terms, faith seems to elude his grasp. Job, who has (re)gained personal faith through his agonizing quest, becomes an instrument of Satan's defeat. ...