PROLEGOMENA:
POLEMICAL ATTITUDES AGAINST
ANTHROPOMORPHIC TRADITIONS

1. ANTI-ADAMIC POLEMICS IN BIBLICAL
AND SECOND TEMPLE MATERIALS

The noetic paradigm was not the first counterargument to anthropomorphism. Biblical and pseudepigraphic materials confirm the presence of anthropomorphic tendencies, especially in traditions associated with the divine kabod and Adam’s figure. However, modern scholars have explored some theological traditions which criticized the Adamic and kabod trends for various theological reasons and advanced new theological categories of discourse. For example, the tradition of Shem (the Divine Name) emerged most likely in opposition to the kabod trend, particularly in the context of a polemic between two distinct groups of the late First Temple: the Priestly and the Deuteronomic schools.\(^1\) The central idea in this debate concerned the nature of God’s manifestation. The concept of “divine glory,” a key notion of the Priestly school, was many times associated with anthropomorphic descriptions of God.\(^2\) In contradistinction, the Deuteronomic school opposed this conception about God’s manifestation and advanced the idea that Yahweh’s favorite way of appearance was his Name.\(^3\)

In connection with the Second Temple, several scholars have underlined the “long-lasting competition between Adamic and Enochic traditions,” raging from the first books of the Ethiopic Enoch (for example, Animal...

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\(^3\) In addition to the above authors, see also George H. van Kooten, The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses: Perspectives from Judaism, the Pagan Graeco-Roman World, and Early Christianity (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Sandra L. Richter, The Deuteronomistic History and the Name Theology: “Lesakken semo san” in the Bible and the Ancient Near East (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002).
Apocalypse) to the Slavonic Enoch. In addition to Enochic traditions, Michael Stone includes Noachic trends among the opponents to the Adam-driven trajectories and makes the following observation concerning the Dead Sea documents: “Enochic explanation of the origin of evil contrasts with that which relates it to Adam’s sin. Adam apocrypha and legendary developments of the Adam stories are strikingly absent from Qumran, while there are many works associated with the axis from Enoch to Noah.” Furthermore, Andrei Orlov indicates that the competition between the exalted figures of Adam and Enoch played a key role in several interwoven polemical attitudes between the Enochic tradition and such other theological poles of the Second Temple as those emphasizing the figures of Adam, Moses, and Noah. Additionally, Orlov mentions a late Second Temple and early post-Temple revival of the debate between kabod-type and shem-type theologies. This revival emphasizes the divergence between kabod traditions and a theological position favoring some more subtle forms of divine manifestation, such as the divine Name and the divine Voice.

2. EZEKIEL’S DUAL-TENSION DISCOURSE: BETWEEN THE STRIFE FOR ACCURATE DESCRIPTION AND THE AWARENESS OF THE LINGUISTIC TOOLS’ LIMITATION

It is worth mentioning, however, that sometimes biblical discourse is more complex than the dichotomy between anthropomorphism and aniconism. One of the most gripping and refined representations of God comes from a prophetic corpus of the Hebrew Bible, particularly Ezekiel 1 and 10, two visionary texts very similar in their content. As a special discursive strategy, the author always employs the preposition “like (כ)” before the linguistic

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6 See Orlov, Enoch.