

HEISER IS WRONG

A Response to Dr. Michael S. Heiser's Criticism of the Works of Zecharia Sitchin

Aerik Vondenburg

aerikvondenburg.com, 2014

The subject of “Ancient Aliens” has provoked vehement contention between proponents of the extraterrestrial deity hypothesis and the skeptical so-called “debunkers.” Perhaps none of the higher-profile critics have been as reactionary as Michael Heiser, the creator of the website Sitchiniswrong.com.

Dr. Michael S. Heiser is a conservative-leaning scholar who is especially critical of the works of Zecharia Sitchin. Sitchin is the author of the Earth Chronicle series and is one of the most popular proponents of the so-called “ancient astronaut” theory. Although Heiser accuses ancient alien theorists of altering the data in order to force it to adhere to their interpretations, it should be understood that Heiser has his own agenda that he is seeking to promote.

THE ANUNNAKI AND NIBIRU

According to Zecharia Sitchin, the god-like beings who are referred to in the ancient Mesopotamian texts as the “Anunnaki” were a race of extraterrestrials from an undiscovered planet in our own solar-system called Nibiru. In regards to this particular subject, I acknowledge that I have found no evidence that Nibiru was any other planet in our solar-system other than perhaps Jupiter—according to the Babylonian Mul Apin star catalog, or Mercury—according to the K.6174: 9 and K.12769: 6 tablets. However, according to Sitchin's theory, these planets are not the enigmatic “twelfth planet.” Moreover, in this modern-day era of advanced technology (e.g., the Hubble telescope), it is extremely unlikely that another life-supporting planet in our own solar system has not yet been discovered. In the Babylonian Enuma Elish text, Nibiru seems to be referred to as a star. However, these texts are younger than the Sumerian accounts, and therefore most likely do not reflect the original definition. The older Sumerian narratives all describe Nibiru (i.e., Nibru, or Neburu) in local terms; namely, as a city. It was a location that could be accessed by boat¹, and where human-beings (i.e., the “black-headed people”) also dwelled². These descriptions seem to rule out an extra-planetary definition. However, if the city really was as grand as the Sumerian texts indicate, then it is certainly curious that it has never been found on Earth—especially when other major cities of the same era and location have been uncovered. All of these different descriptions could be indicating that the Mesopotamians themselves were not entirely sure what Nibiru was. Therefore, even though Sitchin's Nibiru theory is most likely incorrect, until the city is located in our own world it cannot be ruled out that it existed on some other.

According to Heiser³, there is not a single Sumerian text that associates the Anunnaki with Nibiru. He then challenges ancient astronaut theorists to show him such a text. He encourages investigators to use the online Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature⁴ to do the research. However, according to the ETCSL, not only are the Anunnaki found in Nibiru but they are found frequently.

In these translations, Nibiru is referred to as “Nibru,” and the Anunnaki are referred to as the

¹. Enki and the World Order text.

². Lament for Nibru text.

³. He makes this claim on both his website Sitchinwrong.com and in the *Ancient Aliens Debunked* documentary.

⁴. ETCSL is run by the faculty of Oriental Studies at the University of Oxford.

“Anuna.” The reader should be aware that no legitimate scholar denies that the Anunnaki, the Anunaku, the Anuna, and Nibiru and Nibru are not the same; which raises the question: is Heiser really not aware of this? If so, this is certainly an amateurish blunder on his part.

In order to understand what was happening in those archaic times, it is necessary to understand that the gods and the Anuna are of the same species. For example, in the following passage the god Enlil is referred to as the “most powerful of all the Anuna gods”:

Enlil, the beaming light,, whose utterance is immutable, the most
powerful of the Anuna gods,,
—A dedication of a statue (Šulgi V)

The word Anuna, or Anunnaki, signified that these were divine beings who were the direct royal-blooded descendants of the supreme patriarch god, Anu (i.e., An)—who is the father of Enlil. This relationship is referred to in the following text by the Anunnaki god, Enki; who is Enlil's brother:

I am named with a good name by Ninḫursaĝa. I am the leader of the **Anuna**
gods. I was born as the firstborn son of holy **An**."
—Enki and the world order

Foremost among the eldest of the sons of An, were Enki and Enlil, who met in the “shrine of Nibru,” along with [drum-roll . . .] the “Anuna gods.”

In the shrine of **Nibru**, Enki provided a meal for Enlil, his father. He seated

An at the head of the table and seated Enlil next to An. He seated Nintur in the place of honour and seated the **Anuna** gods at the adjacent places (?)⁵.
—Enki's journey to Nibru

In the following passage, we are told of a relationship between the Anuna gods and Nibru:

Enki and Ninki, Enul and Ninul, the **Anuna**, the lords who determine destiny there, the spirits of **Nibru**, and the protective goddesses of the E-kur,
—A praise poem of Išme-Dagan (Išme-Dagan A + V)

And so forth:

..... who alone surpasses heaven and earth, the exalted one, prominent among the **Anuna** gods, whose utterances cannot be overturned! Nunamnir, whose decisions cannot be altered, proud one imbued with terrifying awesomeness, { who alone is exalted } { (1 ms. has instead:) who alone is eminent, the foremost one } among the Great Princes, has taken his seat in the shrine of **Nibru**, in Dur-an-ki, in E-kur, the temple where the fates are determined, in the holy shining temple.
—An adab to Enlil for Būr-Suen (Būr-Suen B)

As the mušu fish play noisily there, Ninlil rejoices. As the fish,
Enki rejoices. As the suḫurmaš fish dart about, Nanna rejoices. The **Anuna**

⁵. The question mark at the end of the sentence indicates that the last section of the text was damaged. Nevertheless, we know that the Anuna gods were indeed present at the banquet table in Nibru because shortly after the preceding passage appears we are told that Enlil proceeded to address “the Anuna gods.” The entire passage can be found at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.1.4#>

gods rejoice at lifts its head in the Euphrates; it In the midst of ever-flowing water is carried. In joyous **Nibru**, he moors the holy barge at the quay.

—Šulgi and Ninlil's barge: a tigi (?) to Ninlil (Šulgi R)

[. . .] in **Nibru**, the mountain of the greatest divine powers, from where they had taken an unfamiliar path -- at Enlil's word the **Anuna**, those very lords who determine the fates, ordered that the temples which they had forsaken and the jewels, put there long ago, which had been carried off by the wind, should all be restored!

—The lament for Nibru

"Let my beloved city, the sanctuary **Nibru**, raise its head as high as heaven. Let my city be pre-eminent among the cities of my brothers. Let my temple rise (?) the highest among the temples of my brothers. Let the territory of my city be the freshwater well of Sumer. Let the **Anuna**, my brother gods, bow down there.

—Ninurta's return to Nibru: a šir-gida to Ninurta

In the heart of **Nibru**, where the divine powers were allotted and the black-headed people prolifically multiplied, the city's heart no longer revealed any sign of intelligence -- there where the **Anuna** used to give advice!

—The lament for Nibru

Therefore, Heiser's claim that the Anunnaki are not associated with Nibiru is either a stunning act of incompetence or a deliberate attempt to mislead his audience.

PANBABYLONIANISM

Heiser attempts to discredit some of Sitchin's theories by claiming that there is no evidence of literary borrowing between the biblical and the Mesopotamian texts. Heiser claims on his PaleoBabble blog⁶ that “scholars do NOT hold this view.”

The only reason that I can think of why someone who holds degrees in ancient history, the Hebrew Bible, and Semitic languages, and who should know better, would say something that is so blatantly untrue is because Heiser is attempting to promote an interpretation that is more compatible with his Judeo-Christian beliefs.

To make the claim that the Judean-Israelite scribes and redactors who wrote and compiled what became the Old Testament/Tanakh were not influenced by their neighbors in the region, especially when there is ample archaeological evidence that indicates a common cultural milieu, is absurd. His claim is made even more preposterous after Heiser himself admits that the imagery that is found in the book of Ezekiel was inspired by Babylonian motifs!⁷

We will first consider what legitimate critical scholars have to say before consulting the actual texts themselves:

The extent of the Hebrew debt to Sumer becomes more apparent from day to day as a result of the gradual piecing together and translation of the Sumerian literary works; for as can now be seen, they have quite a number features in common with the books of the Bible. [. . .] The ideas and ideals of the Sumerians—their cosmology, theology, ethics, and system of education—permeated to a greater or lesser extent the thoughts and writings of all the peoples of the ancient Near East. [. . .] And the Hebrews of Palestine, the land where the books of the Bible were composed, redacted, and edited, were no exception.

—Samuel Noah Kramer Ph.D., *The Sumerians*

⁶. Under the title, “Is the Book of Genesis Plagiarized from Sumerian and Akkadian (Mesopotamian) Sources?”

<http://michaelsheiser.com/PaleoBabble/2009/09/is-the-book-of-genesis-plagiarized-from-sumerian-and-akkadian-mesopotamian-sources/comment-page-1/>

⁷. <http://www.sitchinwrong.com/ezekielnotes.htm>

Similarities between the account of Noah's Flood in the Hebrew scriptures and the Mesopotamian flood tales are great and obvious. Despite some lesser differences, there is no reasoned body of opinion that claims they are unrelated. The accepted view is that the archetypal account originated in Mesopotamia. The earliest extant Mesopotamian version is far older than the biblical account, and the Flood story bears specifically Mesopotamian details that cannot reasonably be supposed to derive from a Hebrew original. Near Eastern scholars have consequently turned to the cuneiform sources. The most well-known and detailed Mesopotamian account of the Flood is found in the Gilgamesh Epic. Even this account, however, seems to have been somewhat abbreviated because of the literary role that it plays within the broader story of Gilgamesh's confrontation with mortality. Closely parallel are the lengthy but, in part, ill-preserved accounts in the Atrahasis Epic and the shorter and incomplete Sumerian Deluge Myth. Briefer references to the Flood serve as prefaces to several other myths. Myths are frequently introduced by an abbreviated account of some monumental mythic event, such as the Flood or creation itself. There are other scattered fragments, and a version of the Mesopotamian Flood tale even survives in the sadly incomplete fragments of the writings of the Babylonian priest Berossus, who lived in the late fourth and early third centuries BCE.

—David MacDonald Ph.D., “The Flood: Mesopotamian Archeological Evidence”
(Vol.8, No.2, spring 1988)

It is within the primeval history that scholars have long noted the strong influence of Mesopotamian themes and stories. In particular the flood story (Gen. 6-8) has such a close parallel with the Babylonian flood story that there must be a direct literary relationship between the two. [...] As I have argued elsewhere, J⁸ seems to have drawn his traditional material for this part of his history from both Eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamian sources.

⁸. J is one of the primary authors of the first five books of the Bible. It stands for Jahwist.

—John Van Seters Ph.D., *The Pentateuch: A Social Science Commentary*

Even the Judeo-Christian scholar Joseph Blenkinsopp, Ph.D.⁹, admits that the Genesis account “has drawn on a well-established literary tradition best represented by the Mesopotamian Atrahasis text” (Blenkinsopp 1992: 93-94). One of the records that the Judean scribes obviously referred to was the following supplementary text to the Babylonian Enuma Elish text:

When the gods in their assembly had made [the world], and had created the heavens, and had formed [the Earth], and had brought living creatures into being [. . .] and [had fashioned] the cattle of the field, and the beasts of the field [. . .]
—The Babylonian Creation Tablet

In the beginning Elohim created heaven and earth [. . .] Then Elohim said, “Let the earth produce every type of living creature: every type of domestic animal, crawling animal, and wild animal.”
—Genesis 1.1-24

In the original flood stories, Noah is referred to as Zuisudra. In the Sumero-Akkadian Epic of Gilgamesh, he is referred to as Utnapishtim.

Pull down, (and) fashion a vessel (therewith); abandon possessions,
Life do thou seek, (and) thy hoard disregard, and save life; every creature

⁹. Joseph Blenkinsopp is the John A. O'Brien Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at the University of Notre Dame and former president of the Catholic Biblical Association. He has also taught at various Judeo-Christian seminaries.

Make to embark in the vessel. The vessel, which thou art to fashion, Apt be its measure; its beam and its length be in due correspondence,(Then) [on] the deep do thou launch it."

—Enki/Ea, Epic of Gilgamesh (the Flood Tablet)

“Make yourself a ship of cypress wood. Make rooms in the ship and coat it inside and out with tar. This is how you should build it: the ship is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. Make a roof for the ship, and leave an 18-inch-high opening at the top. Put a door in the side of the ship. Build the ship with lower, middle, and upper decks. I’m about to send a flood on the earth to destroy all people under the sky—every living, breathing human. Everything on earth will die.”

—Elohim, Genesis 6.14

All the windstorms and gales arose together, and the flood swept over the
After the flood had swept over the land, and waves and windstorms had rocked the huge boat for seven days and seven nights, Utu the Sun god came out, illuminating heaven and earth. Zi-ud-sura could drill an opening in the huge boat and the hero Utu entered the huge boat with his rays. Zi-ud-sura the king prostrated himself before Utu. The king sacrificed oxen and offered innumerable sheep.

—The Flood Story (Segment D)

Noah built an altar to Yahweh. On it he made a burnt offering of each type of clean animal and clean bird. Yahweh smelled the soothing aroma. Yahweh said to himself, “I will never again curse the ground because of humans, even though from birth their hearts are set on nothing but evil.

—Genesis 8.20

(Then) I opened a hatchway, and down on my cheek streamed the sunlight, [...] Into the distance I gazed, to the furthest bounds of the Ocean. Land was upreared at

twelve (points), and the Ark on the Mountain of Nisir Grounded; the Mountain of Nisir held fast, nor gave lease to her shifting. [...] (Then), when the seventh day dawned, I put forth a dove, and released (her), (But) to and fro went the dove, and returned (for) a resting-place was not. (Then) I a swallow put forth and released; to and fro went the swallow, She (too) returned, (for) a resting-place was not; I put forth a raven, Her, (too,) releasing; the raven went, too, and the abating of waters Saw; and she ate as she waded (and) splashed, (unto me) not returning.

—Utnapishtim, The Epic of Gilgamesh (The Flood tablet)

After 40 more days Noah opened the window he had made in the ship and sent out a raven. It kept flying back and forth until the water on the land had dried up. Next, he sent out a dove to see if the water was gone from the surface of the ground. The dove couldn't find a place to land because the water was still all over the earth. So it came back to Noah in the ship. He reached out and brought the dove back into the ship. He waited seven more days and again sent the dove out of the ship. The dove came to him in the evening, and in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf. Then Noah knew that the water was gone from the earth. He waited seven more days and sent out the dove again, but it never came back to him.

—Genesis 8.6

More and more animals disembarked onto the earth. Zi-ud-sura the king prostrated himself before An and Enlil. An and Enlil treated Zi-ud-sura kindly, they granted him life like a god, they brought down to him eternal life. At that time, because of preserving the animals and the seed of mankind, they settled Zi-ud-sura the king in an overseas country, in the land Dilmun, where the sun rises.

—The Flood Story (Segment E)

It is obvious that the antiquarian accounts of the Mesopotamians were integrated into the

Hebrew record in order to help explain their own history. What the redactor scribes did in regards to primeval history was to simply insert Hebrew names and theological ideology over earlier Mesopotamian accounts. Thus Ziusudra/Utnapishtim/Atra Hasis became Noah; while Enlil, Enki, Utu, and the rest of the Anunnaki gods became “Elohim.”—which was eventually altered into monotheistic form by the Jahwists at a later time. However, as my upcoming books, *The Genesis of Revelation* and *The Secret Universe*, will show, Yahweh was actually “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob,” (Exodus 3:6) which occurred in a later era.

Furthermore, the Ten Commandments, as well as the laws of Moses, were significantly similar to other god-given law codes of the same era, such as *The Thirty Teachings of Amen-Em-Ope*, *The Code of Hammurabi*, *The Code of Ur-Nammu*, *Code of Shulgi*, etc. Indeed, accounts of kings who were guided by a higher power to defeat the enemies of their god (e.g., *The Mesha Stele* [i.e., the *Annals of Mesha*]) were not significantly different than the Yahwehist accounts¹⁰. Furthermore, the covenant between Yahweh and the people of Israel in Deuteronomy is significantly similar to seventh-century Assyrian vassal treaties (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 281). Indeed, the Hebrew version appears to have been documented at a time of Assyrian hegemony in that region.

It should therefore be understood that the term that Heiser refers to denote this syncretism, i.e., “panbabyloniansim,” is actually a misnomer. This is due to the fact that the Judean Israelites were influenced by *all* of their neighbors in the region, not just the Babylonians (Coogan 1978: 20-21, 77-80; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 281).

Let's now take a look at one of the scholars who allegedly agrees with Heiser's argument. Heiser cites the work of Victor Hurowitz¹¹, a former professor at Ben-Gurion University in Israel. According to the eulogy that is posted on the Society for Biblical Literature website (Dr. Hurowitz passed away in 2013)¹², “Victor was raised in a Conservative Jewish home, later adopting Modern Orthodoxy.” His entire life was spent in various Hebrew schools and temples.

¹⁰. For more information about this subject see: Matthews, Victor H., Don C. Benjamin. *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories From the Ancient Near East*. Paulist Press, 2006.

¹¹ <http://michaelsheiser.com/PaleoBabble/2009/09/is-the-book-of-genesis-plagiarized-from-sumerian-and-akkadian-mesopotamian-sources/>

¹² <http://www.sbl-site.org/assets/pdfs/VictorHurowitz-English.pdf>

The reason I am bringing up Dr. Horowitz's cultural and religious background is to help the reader understand the environment that influenced his interpretations. Heiser holds up Horowitz as an example of someone who does not hold a Christian bias, and yet, it apparently never occurred to Heiser that a Yahwehist Jewish bias could exist.

However, despite the example that Heiser provides that indicates that Horowitz was critical of the biblical Mesopotamian relationship, Horowitz also acknowledged a Mesopotamian influence!

Hurowitz investigated cultic worship in the Hebrew Bible in the light of material from Mesopotamia. His doctoral dissertation, subsequently revised and significantly expanded, was the subject of his first book, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in the Light of Mesopotamian and North-West Semitic Writings*, JSOT Supp. Series 115 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992)¹³. In this work, Hurowitz analyzes the account of the building of Solomon's Temple in 1 Kings 5–9, demonstrating that the biblical account was based upon a Mesopotamian literary model of building accounts, and also clarifies ideas relating to temple construction, such as the need for divine approval of the building program, the dedication ceremony, and the reward the king receives from on high for his efforts.

—Shalom M. Paul, “Eulogy for Avigdor (Victor) Hurowitz”

Whatever Heiser's excuse is for either not knowing this, or not admitting that he knows it, the point is that this is another example of him misleading his audience.

However, despite his tirades against “panbabylonianism,” Heiser eventually pulls one of his shifty flip-flops by admitting the following:

¹³. Unfortunately, this work is no longer in print.

The logical question, then, was "what's the alternative?" The answer is **not** that the Hebrew Bible was dictated from on high and is utterly unique. That is also a view that has proven to be untenable with the advance of modern scholarship.

The alternative is actually quite simple. No legitimate scholar in biblical studies disputes that there are similarities between the literature of Israel, Sumer, Akkad, Ugarit -- and Egypt, and the Hittite civilization. The question is why the similarities exist. The answer held in great consensus today is that it is because all these civilizations shares a common cultural, linguistic, literary, and religious worldview. Because parts of the Hebrew Bible were composed or edited in Babylon during the exile, the possibility of some borrowing here and there exists, but it is done for fairly obvious reasons of theological polemic. In other words, The Hebrew Bible, as the latest literary creation among these civilizations, at times draws on each of them, not for worldview material (they already had a common pool of ideas), but to make deliberate, often antagonistic, theological statements about the beliefs of the other nations and their belief in the superiority of their God, Yahweh, compared to others.
—Dr. Michael S. Heiser, Sitchiniswrong.com

So now Heiser admits that the Bible was not actually “dictated from on high and is utterly unique.” He now admits that “no legitimate scholar in biblical studies disputes that there are similarities” between the literature of Israel and Mesopotamia. He now admits that “some borrowing here and there exists.” He now admits that there was a “common pool of ideas”—which clearly contradicts his earlier statement about how scholars “do NOT hold this view.” He then ends the paragraph by reverting back to his mistaken interpretations. According to Heiser, assimilation occurred so that the redactors/scribes could make “deliberate, often antagonistic, theological statements about the beliefs of the other nations” (etc.); which is downright

ridiculous.

Despite his certifications from the institutions of man, it is evident that Heiser's reasoning is clouded by the faith-based veil of Judeo-Christian indoctrination, and therefore, should not be mistaken as representing some sort of enlightened or scholarly consensus.

THE ELOHIM

Sitchin's contends that the deity of the Old Testament was actually a group of beings who are referred to (especially in the book of Genesis) as the “Elohim”—however, Sitchin does not deny the singularity of Yahweh, the God of Abraham. It is true that the Hebrew word *Elohim* (or *Elim*) is the plural form of the words *El*, or *Eloah*, which are the singular terms for God. The plurality of the Elohim explains the plural pronouns that can be found in the following passages:

Then Elohim said: “Let us make humans in our image, after our likeness [. . .]”
—Genesis 1.26

And Yahweh¹⁴ Elohim said: “Behold, the man has become like one of us [. . .]”
—Genesis 3.22

In one of his tirades, Heiser declares that the word “elohim does *not* always mean gods (plural)”¹⁵. He supports his argument by referring to the Amarna letters. The Amarna letters (i.e., El-Amarna tablets) are a correspondence between Egypt and its representatives in Canaan

¹⁴. Here we find an example of a Yahwehist scribe attaching the title-name of the God of Abraham onto this earlier account.

¹⁵. <http://www.sitchiniswrong.com/Elohim/Elohim.htm>

and the Amorite kingdom of Amurru (in north Lebanon and Syria) that date back to around the fourteenth century BCE. In these letters, the plural form of God is used in a singular context; which, of course, is similar to the Hebrew word, *Elohim*. Heiser would have his audience believe that mixing singular and plural terms was a common practice during that era; however, this is not true. The correspondences were actually written by the governors of the Pharaoh's empire in Syria-Palestine, which was a society that was in the process of evolving into the Yahwehist Hebrew culture and language during that time, and therefore may be influenced by that nascent monotheistic religious ideology. Indeed, the biblical sites of “Megiddo” and “Jerusalem” are specifically referred to in the letters (Matthews and Benjamin 2006: 147-149). Indeed, it is a Canaanite who purportedly addresses the Pharaoh as “my gods, my sun-god,” not the Pharaoh (Pope 1955: 21). Therefore, the plural form for God that is presented in a singular context—if it was not a mistake committed by the scribe—could be influenced by the same practice that is found in the Hebrew Bible, and therefore does not represent the common beliefs of others. It cannot also be ruled out that the Canaanite who uttered those words was actually calling out to the plural gods alongside the singular Sun god. Furthermore, such instances are uncertain aberrations and do not constitute evidence of “the plural majesty” in every case (Pope 1955: 6, 21). Moreover, if we are to consider the Amarna letters then we must also consider other Levantine records, such as the Ugaritic texts (as well as the Mesopotamian records) in which the plural *ilm* is used in the context of a pantheon of gods (Pope 1955: 6). Indeed, elsewhere in the Amarna letters itself, the word “gods” is accompanied by plural definite articles and pronouns (Moran 1992: 64). Moreover, the plural pronouns that exist alongside the word *Elohim*, as well as the passages that describe the *Elohim* as foreign gods in the Bible (1 Kings 11:33) clearly negates the singular interpretation.

Nevertheless, it is true that the word *Elohim* is used in both a plural and singular context in the Bible (Pope 1955: 10). This is because the Bible was not written by a single author. This contradiction reflects the conversion process that was happening during that era as the Yahwehists gradually exerted their influence. Contrary to popular belief, this conversion did not happen all at once. The Yahweh-alone group was actually a minority faction before the decline of the era of kings. When this decline happened it left a power vacuum that they were

able to fill (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 248, 310). Indeed, archaeological evidence indicates that monotheism was actually a late development (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 234). The truth is that Yahweh was once worshiped together with Baal, Asherah, as well as the other gods of their neighbors in the region. (Day 2002: 42, 45, 227; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 241-242; Penchansky 2005: 77-78; Smith 2002: 2-13, 65-66, 109). The monotheists did not actually attain full power for an extended period of time and on a widespread geographical scale until after the Babylonian captivity period. This is why the Old Testament/Tanakh itself is filled with indignant tales of rulers who did not submit themselves entirely to monotheistic Yahwehism before this time. The plural terms were a vestige left over from a monolatrous/henotheistic past. Indeed, this Canaanite past is reflected in the use of the word El for God in the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, both Saul and even David gave their children names containing the designation Baal. This was a way in which to pay tribute to the deity (Coogan 1978 :20); which is why the name El also appears in other biblical names. Therefore, when the scribes altered the meaning of the word Elohim, they were attempting to reconcile a new theology with the older traditional one. Consequently, the use of the plural term in a singular context does not negate the original meaning.

What must be understood is that the version of events that has become the Bible are written only from the view of a small monotheistic faction. It was this group of priest scribes who essentially rewrote history when they devised the books that became the Old Testament/Tanakh (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 249).

Despite his reference to the Amarna tablets, Heiser does acknowledge that the word Elohim can be both singular and plural. How then are we to know when it is singular? According to Heiser we must refer to “grammatical and contextual clues.” But if we are to refer to these types of clues then we must consider the plural pronouns, such as “us,” and “we,” that are found in the very same passages. After backing himself into this corner, Heiser then admits that these other Elohim *did* exist, but they exist as spirit beings!¹⁶ However, this idea conflicts not only with the biblical passages that describe the Elohim in physical terms but also contradicts the Judeo-Christian ideology that he is attempting to defend since it would indicate that these

¹⁶. <http://www.thedivinecouncil.com/What%20is%20an%20Elohim.pdf>

spirit beings are equivalent to God. Heiser attempts to circumnavigate around this contradiction by claiming that the other Elohim are still subordinate to Yahweh because Yahweh is so-called “species unique.”¹⁷ However, the claim that Yahweh is species unique is, in reality, only a faith-based assumption that is based on unsupported claims that are found in the Bible; a record that legitimate scholars have found to be riddled with contradictions, mistakes, and outright self-serving misrepresentation (Ehrman 2005, 2009, Finkelstein Silberman 2001, Friedman 1987, etc.). What must also be understood is that these claims of divine superiority were made by the followers of Yahweh, who were forced to “give praise” to the Lord or else suffer fatal punishments. This is hardly evidence for the superiority of Yahweh. Moreover, the same claims were made by other Elohim/gods and their followers in the same era and in the same geographical region as well. Therefore, using the same methodology that Heiser employs, I could then refer to passages in other texts, where the unique superiority of some foreign Elohim, such as Enlil, Baal, Aten, etc. is declared, and then use that as evidence to assert the uniqueness of that particular deity. I could also make the assertion that the scribe who wrote that claim was even divinely inspired, but of course, that would not mean that it was actually true. Some might make the case that these other foreign gods were not Elohim; however, we know that this is not true because according to the Bible itself (1 Kings 11:33) the other foreign gods were Elohim! Therefore, it can be concluded that Heiser's biased and flawed interpretation that “Yahweh is an Elohim but no other Elohim is Yahweh” is simply not true.

The following is an excerpt from The Esoteric Edition of my book in which this topic is addressed:

The only extant data that indicates that Yahweh was unique comes to us only from claims made by Yahweh's devoted followers themselves, who, of course, were expected to magnify and promote this interpretation. However, when concurrent ancient texts are examined and compared it becomes obvious that there were others in the council assembly of the gods—which the Old Testament/Tanakh admit existed—who not only bore similar abilities but were

¹⁷ In a meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, 2010 titled: “Should the Plural Elohim of Psalm 82 Be Understood as Men or Divine Beings?”

also attributed with the very same elite status:

[. . .] father Enki, you are king of the assembled people.

—Enki and the World Order

Elohim is king of all nations.

—Psalm 47.8

O lord of wide understanding, who is as wise as you? Enki, the great lord, who can equal your actions?

—Enki and Ninmah

Who in the skies can compare with Yahweh?

—Psalm 89.6

O Marduk, thou are chiefest among the gods, they fate is unequalled.

—Enuma Elish (The Epic of Creation)

Elohim presides in the assembly; he gives judgment among the gods.

—Psalm 82.1

In great majority of cases, the Mesopotamian texts actually predate the biblical record. Therefore, this is not a case of so-called “false gods” attempting to imitate the real God. Moreover, it is evident that Yahweh and his retinue of priest/prophet/scribes were carrying on in an equivalent method that had been established by others before them.

I alone am the creator. When I came into being, all life began to develop. When the almighty speaks, all else comes to life.—Atum, Hymn to Atum

It can therefore be concluded that the only attribute that was unique about Yahweh and his movement was not only its zealous adherence to tradition but its extraordinary devotion to the written word.

Here is what Heiser says concerning the Elohim¹⁸:

“When I came to realize that there were other G-O-D-S in a heavenly council, it seemed (and that’s an important word) as though Yahweh was just one among equals. That bothered me.”

—Dr. Michael S. Heiser, “So What Exactly is an Elohim?”

This is a telling admission on his part. The fact is that the information “bothered” him because it conflicted with his Judeo-Christian belief system. What he then had to do was to devise an explanation that he could make adhere to his ingrained ideology. This is ironic and amusing because not only does he accuse Sitchin and the ancient astronaut theorists of doing the same thing, but elsewhere in his writings he warns his fellow Judeo-Christians of “bringing theology to the text” and “forcing” interpretations to fit into “a comfortable theological box”¹⁹. Likewise, Heiser also writes²⁰:

“But the Hebrew text should not be translated or exegeted [i.e., interpreted] so that it conforms to our theological expectations or needs.”

—Dr. Michael S. Heiser, “Should the Plural אלהים of Psalm 82 be Understood

¹⁸. In a sample of his book that is posted on his website (as of 3-13-14).

¹⁹. In his essay “Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible.”

²⁰. In an annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society.

as Men or Divine Beings?”

However, in the following passage Heiser essentially admits his bias when he boasts that his interpretation endows “primacy” to the traditional Judeo-Christian perspective:

“The approach to divine plurality and the matter of monotheism offered here is theologically and philosophically sound, while giving primacy of place to the data of the Hebrew Bible.”

—Dr. Michael S. Heiser, “Monotheism, Polytheism, Monolatry, or Henotheism? Toward an assessment of Divine Plurality in the Hebrew Bible”

Here we see that in Heiser's case it is a situation of do as I say not as I do—which can also be referred to as hypocrisy.

Let's now take a closer look now at Heiser's spirit-beings theory. In one of his essays, he makes the following claim:

“All the entities the Hebrew Bible called Elohim have one thing in common: they all inhabit the nonhuman (heavenly) realm.”

—Dr. Michael S. Heiser, “Understanding Israelite Monotheism”

This is not true. There are plenty of cases in the OT/Tanakh where the Elohim inhabit the human realm, not only in spiritual form but in physical form (e.g., Genesis 3:8; Genesis 18:1-33; Genesis 32:22-30, etc.). Heiser is also aware of this and attempts to navigate around this conundrum by making the following faith-based claim: namely, that the Elohim could become

physical or spiritual at will!²¹

This then brings up the inevitable question: where is his proof? Where is the irrefutable evidence that can be verified through rigorous and repeatable scientific testing? Indeed, Heiser should be held accountable to the very same scientific standard that he subjects the extraterrestrial hypothesis to. If he cannot submit such evidence, then, according to his own methodological standard we must conclude that it does not exist.

When it comes to the subject of Yahweh and his relationship with the other Elohim, it must be acknowledged that we are dealing with not only a controversial topic but a complex one. Therefore, there is no way that I am able to completely explain everything without going into greater detail. In this case, I must refer the reader to upcoming books (which I expect to be finished by 2017).

In the following example from my book, the reader may notice similarities between some of Heiser's thinking and my own. This is because not only, in a few cases, does some of our findings concur but I can even use his interpretations not to discredit the extraterrestrial deity hypothesis but to support it.

The subject of the Elohim is complex. This is because the word *Elohim* can refer to different types of entities. For example, the word may not only refer to Yahweh (Genesis 24.12, etc.) but to any supernatural being. In 1 Samuel 28.13, for example, it is reported that an “Elohim” was seen coming up out of the Earth. However, this otherworldly being is not Yahweh, nor is it the Son or the Holy Spirit, but rather the spirit of the deceased prophet, Samuel. Furthermore, the word Elohim may not only refer to members of the council assembly of supernatural beings (Psalm 82.1) but also to foreign gods as well (1 Kings 11.33). Indeed, in Psalm 82 Yahweh reprimands the other Elohim as he pronounces “judgment among the gods”:

I said, “You are gods [Elohim]. You are all sons of the Most High [Elyon].”

—Yahweh, Psalm 82.6

²¹. <http://www.thedivinecouncil.com/What%20is%20an%20Elohim.pdf>

It is obvious, in this case, that Yahweh is not addressing the Son and the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, these other gods seem to be more than mere inanimate idols. Indeed, according to the book of Jeremiah, the other foreign Elohim/gods, such as Chemosh, Milcom, and Bel, were all capable of being “exiled,” “confounded,” and “punished.” These examples indicate the literal plurality of the Elohim, and clearly negate the majestic theory. Also, as will be made apparent in parts to come, the Elohim of the older Genesis account cannot be compared to the heavenly Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of the New Testament. This is because they were not actually the same.

Another interpretation that is used to explain the existence of not only the plural noun but the plural pronouns that coincide alongside it is that Yahweh was talking among an assembly of angels; however, there are reasons to believe that this is not an accurate interpretation. The word angel is derived from the the Greek word *angelos*. It is a word that simply means messenger. The original term was *mal'ak*. Although angels are commonly thought of as beautiful white-robed and haloed humanoid beings, this is not the original definition. The ancient attendants of the Elohim are sometimes more specifically referred to in the Bible as the seraphim and the cherubim. It is commonly believed by the laity that cherubs are baby angels (sometimes with wings); however, these characterizations are actually influenced by the later Hellenistic Eros (i.e., Cupid) myths; as well as the Renaissance era putti (i.e., putto) motif. The word cherubim (i.e., cherub) actually derives from the Assyrian word *karabu*, the Babylonian *karubu*, and the Akkadian *kuribu*, which means mighty and propitious²². Visual representations of these mythic beings appear in Mesopotamian sculptures—which are related to creatures called the shedu and the lamassu. These were originally sculptures stationed at the gateways of the gods and kings. Indeed, these are the same type of imposing figures who allegedly stood guard at the entrance-way of the garden of Eden (Genesis 3.24)²³. What must be understood about the cherubs is that they were originally only artistic images; just like the half eagle, half

²². “Jewish Encyclopedia: cherub,” Jewishencyclopedia.com, 2002-2011, original publication 1906. Accessed 3-18-14.

<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4311-cherub>

²³. I do not consider the account of the cherub in Genesis 3.24 to be evidence of literal living creatures. Especially because of the symbolic images that are already associated with this primeval account.

lion image of the Egyptian, Persian, and Grecian griffin. It was at a later time, such as in the book of Ezekiel, that these creatures were brought to life by the author in order to impress upon the reader the supernatural nature of Yahweh. Indeed, scholars have discovered many cases in the biblical texts of “pious fraud” (Friedman 1987: 102). Indeed, the book of Ezekiel is especially problematic and should not be considered to be a literal report.

Likewise, in the book of Isaiah (6.1-8), the seraphim (i.e., seraph) are described as six-winged half-human half-animal beings that fly around the throne-room of Yahweh (A similar type of description is reported in Revelation 4.6-8). However, it is evident that the seraphim²⁴ were modeled after another Mesopotamian half-man half-beast winged mythological creature—the identity of this creature will be revealed further ahead. Not only does the non-humanoid characteristics of these mythological beings conflict with biblical passages that refer to the anthropomorphic appearance of the Elohim, and not only did they not share the same characteristics and status as that of the Elohim (see also Ezekiel 10.1-20), but they never literally existed!

The biblical record also informs us that there were different kinds of angels. In Genesis 19, for instance, the angels of the Lord are called “men,” and are described in anthropomorphic terms. In this case, could these humanoid angels be the Elohim? However, these beings are not called Elohim, but rather are specifically referred to as angels (i.e., *mal'ak*). However, it is possible that these servant emissaries are of the same genus as beings who are referred to elsewhere in the Old Testament/Tanakh as the *bene ha Elohim* (Genesis 6.2; Job 1.6; Job 38.7), which literally translates as “sons of gods.” Indeed, in Genesis 6, the “sons of the Elohim” are described as physical humanoid beings. These were most likely the same beings who either were the fathers of the hybrid demi-gods—who were referred to in the book of Genesis as the Nephilim (Genesis 6.4)—or were themselves genetic members of that hybrid race. These beings can also be associated with both the Rephaim/Rephaites (Deuteronomy 2.10-11; 3.11), and the “sons of Anak” (Numbers 13.33), as well as a group who are referred to in the Ugaritic

²⁴ In many biblical translations, the word seraphim is translated as “burning serpent,” which is how it appears in Numbers 21.6 and Deuteronomy 8.15; however, seraph can only be translated as such when it is accompanied by the word for serpent (*nachash*). In this case, the burning adjective may be a reference to the burning sensation of the serpent's poison.

texts as the Healers²⁵ (i.e., “the divine ones”) (Coogan 1978: 48-50). According to the scriptures, none of these archaic beings were equal with the Elohim gods, but rather were subordinate descendants. The identity of these beings will be explained more fully in parts to come. Furthermore, in the extra-biblical Book of Enoch (Chapters X, XII, XV), the otherworldly fathers of the Nephilim are referred to as “the Watchers.” This term derives from an incident that is reported in the book of Daniel, in which a being who is described as a “watcher” descended from the sky (Daniel 4.13). Nevertheless, we are still left with questions pertaining to the identity of the Elohim.

Collective texts unearthed from the ancient sites of Sumer, Akkad, Assyria, Babylon and others, tell us that the ancient city-states of Mesopotamia were ruled over by a pantheon of divine beings who the people regarded as gods. The so-called “idols” of gods that are referred to in the biblical record were symbolic representations of those living beings. Therefore, the people did not worship the idols themselves but rather what those idols represented. Indeed, the presence of these other divine beings explains why Yahweh was “jealous” of the other gods (Exodus 34.14).

It is commonly believed that Yahweh denied the existence of the other gods; however, this is not true. Yahweh only commanded that these other gods should not be considered as either equals or superior to him. This is the meaning of the words “before” and “like” in the following passages:

There is no other Elohim like me²⁶.

—Deuteronomy 32.39

You shall have no other Elohim before me.

—Exodus 20.3

What Yahweh actually demanded is that he was to be regarded as the supreme head of the

²⁵. The word “Healers” is translated from the Ugaritic word *rp'um*. This is most likely related to the Hebrew word *Rephaim*.

²⁶. Or: “There is no god with me.”(American Standard Version, Common English Bible, King James Version, World English Bible.)

council of the Elohim. In fact, this divine council of the gods is even mentioned in the Bible itself!:

God [Elohim] presides in the divine council; he gives judgment among the gods [Elohim].

—Psalm 82.1

In this case, could the ancient gods of Mesopotamia, Egypt, and the Indus Valley civilizations—as well as perhaps other civilizations from around the world—be the very same beings who are described in the Old Testament as the Elohim?

Consider the following verse, in which the gods of foreign nations are specifically referred to as the Elohim:

I will do this because they have forsaken me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth, the Elohim of the Sidonians, Chemosh the Elohim of Moab, and Milcom the Elohim of the children of Ammon [. . .]

—Yahweh, 1 Kings 11.33

It therefore is not coincidence that the time-span of the biblical Elohim coincides precisely with the time-span of the ancient gods of Mesopotamia. This is because they derived from the same source.

Most critical scholars generally agree that the books of the Torah were written and compiled by at least four primary sources, those being: the Elohists, the Jahwehists, the Priestly source, and the Deuteronomists²⁷. It is evident that the monotheists of the later tradition altered the usage of the plural Elohim in order to make it adhere to the emerging singular interpretation. Hence sentences such as “Then Elohim said [. . .].” As opposed to the additional plural article:

²⁷. Although what is known as the Documentary Hypothesis has been called in to question in recent years, the basic belief that the books of the OT/Tanakh were written, compiled, and rewritten by numerous writers and redactors over a period of centuries remains the prevailing hypothesis. Furthermore, critics of this hypothesis are not only usually associated in some way with the Judeo-Christian institution, and therefore harbor ideological differences with the very concept that it presents, but they have not provided a convincing alternative (Blenkinsopp 1992: viii).

Then the Elohim said [. . .].

Indeed, the plural terms for God corresponds with the Levantine and Mesopotamian records (which is the standard of Coherence Theory), which report the existence of a pantheon council of gods in that same era and region. The antiquarian accounts of the Mesopotamians were integrated into the Judean/Israelite record (Greenstein 2007: 56; Kramer 1963: 148-149, 290-299; Van Seters 1992: 3, 22; 1999: 114, 117). Perhaps the scribes believed that this was permissible because the patriarch Abraham was from the Mesopotamian city of Ur (Genesis 11:31, 15:7).

Mesopotamian literature, like its religion and law, has also affected the entire Western world. Themes in the initial chapters of Genesis—the Creation, Paradise, the Flood, the Cain-Abel rivalry, the Babel of Tongues—all have Mesopotamian literacy antecedents. Many a psalm is reminiscent of Mesopotamian cultic hymns, and the book of Lamentations copies a favorite literary device of Mesopotamian writers—in Sumer it was common to compose formal lamentations for the destruction of a city. There are also stylistic antecedents for the book of Proverbs in Sumerian collections of sayings, maxims and adages. Even the Song of Solomon, a book unlike any of the others in the Old Testament, may have had an earlier Mesopotamian counterpart in the Sumerian cultic love song.

—Samuel Noah Kramer, *Cradle of Civilization*

The following is another excerpt from The Esoteric Edition of *The Genesis of Revelation*:

Although the Judean scribes and priestly redactors had been exposed to the records of their neighbors to the east, it is also true that a Ugaritic/Canaanite influence is also clearly present. This explains the similarities in Ugaritic/Canaanite and biblical language, culture, and literature (Day 2002: 16, 232-233; Penchansky 2005: 77-78; Smith 2002: 2-13, 19-25, 28). For example,

both El (in the Ugaritic text KTU 1.6 i 35) and Yahweh (Exodus 40) reside in tents (i.e., tabernacles) when they visit the Earth. Both the servants of El (KTU 1.14 ii 10-20) and the servants of Yahweh (Leviticus 16.4) were required to wash themselves with water before making devotional animal sacrifices. Both El (KTU 1.14 i 35) and Yahweh (1 Kings 3.5) appeared to their followers in dreams. Both El (KTU 1.16 i 10) and Yahweh were called “wise” (Proverbs 3.19) and “holy” (Leviticus 19.2). Likewise, the “sons of El” that appear in the Ugaritic tablets. (KTU 1.10 i 1) coincides with the biblical sons of Elohim (Genesis 6.2). According to the Bible itself, Yahweh was El (Genesis 35.1, etc.). He was also known as “Elyon” (Most High), which is an epithet that originally applied to the Canaanite god El (Day 2002: 16, 21; Smith 2002: 32). Therefore, it is evident that El and Yahweh were originally separate deities who eventually became amalgamated (Coogan 1978: 20; Day 2002: 17; Smith 2002: 32-43). This fusion began to occur when Yahwehists—most likely the Levites—entered into Canaan, perhaps from an extended sojourn in Egypt, and began to associate with native Canaanites who were loyal to El (Friedman 1987: 82). This theory coincides with the archaeological evidence, which indicates that the violent takeover of Canaan in the time of Joshua that is reported in the Bible never happened (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 73, 76-79, 81-83). Indeed, even the Old Testament/Tanakh itself reports that the Judean Israelites were Canaanites (Ezekiel 16.3).

The similarities are not restricted to El alone, but also apply to Yahweh's adversary, Baal (Coogan 1978: 20-21, 79-80). For example, both Baal (KTU 1.2 iv 5) and Yahweh (Isaiah 19.1) are said to have rode through the skies in a “cloud,” both revealed themselves on a mountain, both had a temple built of cedar, and both were gods of the storm (Coogan 1978: 20-21, 77).

What is not commonly known is that in its early history, Judaism was not strictly monotheistic, but rather acknowledged the existence, although not the superiority, of other gods besides Yahweh—such as Baal and Asherah (Day 2002: 42, 45, 227; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 241-242; Penchansky 2005: 77-78; Smith 2002: 2-13, 65-66, 109). The reason why this is not more commonly known is because the Old Testament/Tanakh is written from the perspective only one specific group. However, Yahweh was eventually regarded as

reigning supreme above all others after the “Yahweh-alone” party successfully attained positions of power (Day 2002: 228-229; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 248). This is why Yahweh is referred to as the “god of gods” in Deuteronomy 10.17 and Daniel 11.36.

In ancient monarchic Israel, Judaism was not monotheistic but rather monolatristic²⁸ (Day 2002: 228-229; Smith 2002: 3, 13). Archaeological finds prove that monotheism was actually a late development (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 234). The notion that these other gods did not exist, or exist as gods, did not develop until a later time, when the Yahwehists took control of the highest levels of government.

Just as an earthly king is supported by a body of courtiers, so Yahweh has a heavenly court. Originally, these were gods. But as monotheism became absolute, so these were denoted to the status of angels.

—John Day, *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*

Of course, this information contradicts traditional beliefs that pertain to the Torah (i.e., Pentateuch); namely, that it was authored by Moses himself; hence the appellation, “The Five Books of Moses.” However, it is now known that this is not true because not only does the author refer to Moses in the third person, and not only did the author not even claim to be Moses, and not only did the Edomite kings who are referred to in Genesis 36 exist *after* the time of Moses (Friedman 1987: 18-19), and not only do contradictions in the text indicate that more than one person wrote it (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 35, 175-176; Friedman 1987: 17-21), but his death is recorded in the very same record as well. It is also difficult to believe that Moses would have referred to himself as the “humblest man on Earth” (Numbers 12.3). Indeed, scholars acknowledge that the books of the Torah were not compiled and written until many years after the time of Moses (Blenkinsopp 1992 2-4; Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 11-12, 36-38, 68; Friedman 1987: 17-21, 29, 223). However, it is possible that a document that was called the “Book of the Law,” which contained information specifically related only to

²⁸. Monolatry is the belief in the superiority of a singular god without denying the existence of other gods.

regulations, could have been written by Moses himself (according to Deuteronomy 31.24)²⁹, and then incorporated into the accounts that were written and compiled by others at a later time.

Heiser would, of course, disagree with most of this; which makes him not only at odds with ancient astronaut theorists but with many prominent mainstream biblical scholars.

Another specific point that will be examined in my book is what occurs in Deuteronomy 32:8. Heiser completely misconstrues this passage by misinterpreting the designation “Elyon.” Unfortunately, there is no way that I can go into full detail here without going over the history of the context and the difference between El, Elyon, and Yahweh, but I assure the reader that this matter will also be clarified in The Esoteric Edition of my book. What will be shown is that this is yet another case of Heiser misinterpreting the data.

Heiser also asserts that polytheistic types of language and belief was not just an early component of Judaism but rather the belief in the plurality of the Elohim existed all throughout the history of Judaism. In regards to this issue, it is evident that some scribe/redactors held different viewpoints and dealt with the plural issue according to their own understanding throughout the centuries. Some attempted to put the Elohim into a singular context, while others embraced the plural—but most likely for different reasons. Indeed we know that differences of interpretation did occur, which explains many of the contradictions that exist in the Bible. In this case, I contend that attempting to justify or to devise a singular uniform and perfectly consistent interpretation is, of course, futile. Any legitimate scholar would agree with this conclusion. However, what *can* be done is to construct an interpretation that has the *least* amount of problems.

Even though Heiser denies that Yahwehist monotheism gradually emerged from out of Canaanite monolatry/henotheism, he does admit that the Canaanite pantheon and its god El did indeed influence Judaism:

²⁹. Richard E. Friedman, Ph.D., presents a strong case in his book, *Who Wrote the Bible?* that these laws were actually written by the Priestly source centuries later. There is also evidence that indicates that the Book of the Law was actually an older version of Deuteronomy, and was not written until the seventh century BCE (Finkelstein and Silberman 2001: 281).

In Israel's divine council, the highest tier is different from the Canaanites' conception. Instead of El and Baal, his vice-regent, Yahweh occupied both slots in a sort of binitarian godhead (Heiser, "Divine Council"). Yahweh is described in the Hebrew Bible by means of titles and abilities that both El and Baal have in Canaanite literature—these two were conceptually fused in Yahweh. This literary and theological device shows Yahweh superior to the two main divine authority figures in wider Canaanite religion.

—Dr. Michael S. Heiser, "The Divine Council"

The infusion of El and Baal characteristics does not make Yahweh "superior." This is actually more of a case of character larceny than evidence of supernatural superiority.

IN VITRO ADAM

One of Sitchin's theories is that the first *Homo-sapiens* were the result of an *in-vitro* type of experiment that was conducted by the Anunnaki/Elohim. The aim was to create a worker that was intelligent enough to accept commandments, but not endowed enough to challenge their authority. Of course, Heiser disagrees with this. According to Heiser³⁰, "the Hebrew Bible has no indication that humans were designed to be slaves for the gods (in fact, before the fall in Genesis 3, their work was without hardship of any kind)."

Here is what the Bible actually says:

Then Yahweh Elohim took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work the land and to take care of it.

³⁰. <http://www.sitchiniswrong.com/sitchinseminaradam.pdf>

The description of a work-place environment concurs with the original Sumerian texts, in which it is reported that the first human-beings were created to be laborers. If Heiser believes that working, including digging irrigation canals for the “garden” farm, six days a week (except on the Sabbath) in the scorching hot fields of southern Iraq in a place that was once known as *Edinnu*³¹ (i.e., *Edinna*)—which is the original Sumerian word for Eden—without the use of modern-day equipment is without “hardship,” then I suggest that he try it himself. I guarantee that he would not last very long. The notion that the Garden of Eden was some type of permanent holiday in paradise is simply not true. It is apparent that it was only a relaxing paradise for the “Elohim” themselves.

Sitchin believes that the Anunnaki took a previously existing hominid and imprinted upon it the “image” of the gods; meaning that they combined Anunnaki and Earthling DNA in order to create a hybrid worker race. However, according to Heiser, “There is no reference to the divine 'image' in the Sumerian and Akkadian texts,” and that this “is a totally contrived and agenda driven 'translation.'”³² However, the word “image” actually *does* appear in a translation rendered by one of the most acclaimed Sumerian experts of all time, Samuel Noah Kramer Ph.D. (Kramer 1963: 150). Although it is true that the word “image” is Kramer's interpretation of a damaged word in the original text, it must be understood that Kramer was not an ancient astronaut theorist and wrote years before Sitchin's books came out. Therefore, the word was not concocted by Sitchin in order to support his theory. Indeed, Sitchin cites Kramer in his bibliography. Here is how the sentence appears in Kramer's translation:

Oh my mother, the creature whose name you uttered, it exists. Bind upon it the image (?) of the gods; [. . .]

³¹. Archaeologist Juris Zarins claims to have discovered the location of the Garden of Eden in what is now the Iraqi Persian Gulf region using not only textual evidence but LANDSAT images from space (Hamblin 1987). Zarins' theory posits that the biblical Gihon river is what is now known as the Karun river in Iran, and the Pishon river is what is now known as the Wadi Batin river system. This location is also plausible because of its proximity to the original Sumerian city of Eridu.

³². <http://www.sitchiniswrong.com/SitchinSeminarAdam.pdf>

In the Esoteric Edition of my upcoming book, *The Genesis of Revelation*, it will be shown how the genetic manipulation of the *Homo-sapiens* species by advanced beings who are not indigenous to our own world is a theory that cannot be conclusively ruled out.

DR. MICHAEL S. HEISER

Heiser adamantly refutes the existence of extraterrestrials because of what he claims is a lack of evidence, and yet he does not require such hard proof when it comes to his own Judeo-Christian faith. His condemnations also do not take into account the world-wide governmental cover-up of evidence pertaining to UFOs—I go into the evidence and the reasons for this cover-up in my book. He also makes all kinds of faith-based assumptions about the identity of “God” without ever really knowing anything about the true nature of Yahweh—as both editions of my book elucidate.

When I read his writings, especially on his Sitchiniswrong.com website and his Paleobabble blog, I also notice a lot of mean-spirited, immature, and arrogant behavior—which is what I find especially disturbing. Ironically, it was Jesus who warned about such shortcomings. The truth is that Heiser is more qualified to explain subjects related to linguistic analysis rather than with over-all interpretation of characters and events. What Heiser also does not understand is that it takes more than certification from an institution of man in order to understand these extraordinary subjects. Moreover, his misleading statements call his credibility into question.

In the *Ancient Aliens Debunked* video, Heiser advises his audience to “not be enslaved to an authority figure.” Therefore, using his own advice, I urge people not to be mentally enslaved to the narrow-minded, biased, arrogant, and mistaken interpretations of Dr. Michael S. Heiser.

³³. Also known as the Nippur Tablet.

POST SCRIPT CONCERNING MYSELF

A relevant question that must be addressed concerns my own methodology and my own agenda. What is it, you ask?

In The Esoteric Edition of *The Genesis of Revelation*, I write about the process that lead me into the research and writing of my book. I explain the objective, empirical, and epistemological methodology that I referred to during my search for the truth. What I discovered is that it begins with the prerequisite of ridding one's self of all extraneous and artificial influences and beginning anew (*tabula rasa*) with only deductions that either have scientific validity, or that at least can be experienced empirically (*a posteriori*). What I also aim to do is to differentiate between deductive conclusions verses theoretical conjecture.

Although I grew up influenced by the Judeo-Christian tradition, I am no longer limited to any one particular ideology. Although I still maintain a great regard for “Jesus” himself, I now describe myself as an independent researcher. Most of all, I am a free-thinker who writes for other free-thinkers.

Heiser will undoubtedly throw the “antisemitism” card at me (which he has utilized before against others who do not agree with the traditional interpretation). It is an accusation that I wholeheartedly deny. Just because my findings do not agree with the traditional precepts of the Tanakh does not mean that I am a Nazi. I have no issue with the Jewish people themselves. The antisemitism accusation is a polemical technique that people like Heiser use to keep others from thinking critically. If it helps people to know that I myself am of partial Jewish ancestry then I will mention that. If I am prejudice against anyone it is bigots.

I do acknowledge that Heiser has brought up some legitimate points concerning lax methodological standards on the part of the “ancient astronaut” theorists. For example, it is true that Sitchin did take liberties with the translations of the Sumerian texts that cannot always be justified. Nevertheless, I contend that such misconceptions do not negate the entire

extraterrestrial deity hypothesis itself.

I strive to maintain a truthful standard in my own work by checking and rechecking the information for accuracy. However, if there is anything that I have overlooked then I apologize in advance. Any possible errors are not a case of intentional deception on my part. My aim is only to contend the thesis that the data pertaining to the extraterrestrial deity hypothesis is substantial enough to merit serious consideration.

Thank you for your time.

—Aerik Vondenburg

SOURCES

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *A History of Prophecy in Israel*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

———. *The Pentateuch: An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*. Anchor Bible Reference Library/Doubleday, 1992.

Coogan, Michael David (ed., trans.). *Stories from Ancient Canaan*. The Westminster Press, 1978.

Day, John. *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*. Sheffield Academic Press, 2002.

Ehrman, Bart D. *Jesus Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible (and Why We Don't Know About Them)*. Harper One, 2009.

———. *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why*. Harper One, 2005.

Finkelstein, Israel. Silberman, Neil Asher. *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origins of Its Sacred Texts*. The Free Press, 2001.

Friedman, Richard Elliott. *Who Wrote the Bible?* Harper San Francisco, [reprint 1997] 1987.

Greenstein, Edward L. "Sages with a Sense of Humor: The Babylonian Dialogue Between a Master and His Servant and the Book of Qohelet." Clifford, Richard J. (ed.) *Wisdom Literature in Mesopotamia and Israel*. Society of Biblical Literature, No.36, 2007.

Hamblin, Dora Jane. "Has the Garden of Eden been located at last?" *Smithsonian Magazine*, Vol. 18, No. 2, May 1987.

Heiser, Michael S. "The Myth of a Sumerian 12th Planet: 'Nibiru' According to the Cuneiform Sources." *Sitchiniswrong.com*. Accessed 3 14-14.

Kean, Leslie. *UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go On the Record*. Harmony Books, 2010.

Kramer, Samuel Noah. *Cradle of Civilization: Great Ages of Man, A History of the World's Cultures*. Time-Life Books, 1978.

———. *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-Nine Firsts in Man's Recorded History*. University Press (3rd edition), 1981/ Thames and Hudson, 1961.

———. *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character*. University of Chicago Press. 1963.

Matthews, Victor H., Don C. Benjamin. *Old Testament Parallels: Laws and Stories From the Ancient Near East*. Paulist Press, 2006.

Moran, William L. (ed., trans.) *The Amarna Letters*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.

Penchansky, David. *Twilight of the Gods: Polytheism in the Hebrew Bible*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Pope, Marvin H. *El in the Ugaritic Texts*. Vol. 2. Brill Archive, 1955.

Smith, Mark S.. *Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company (2nd Edition), 2002.

———. *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*. Oxford University Press, 2001.

Sturrock, Peter A.. *The UFO Enigma: The First Major Scientific Inquiry Since the Condon Report*. Warner Book, 1999.

Van Seters, John. *The Pentateuch: A Social Science Commentary*. Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

———. *Prologue to History: The Yahwehist as Historian in Genesis*. Westminster/Knox Press, 1992.