

Key Theological Distinctions Between Israel And Her Neighbors

Issue	Israelite Ideal	Pagan Polytheism
Ultimacy of deity	Yahweh is the ultimate power in the universe. He answers to no one and there are no limits on His jurisdiction.	The gods have competing agendas and limited jurisdiction. Even as a corporate body they do not exercise ultimate sovereignty.
Manifestation of deity	Yahweh cannot be represented in material form or in the form of any natural phenomenon.	Deities represented iconically, anthropomorphically or in natural phenomenon.
Disposition of deity	Yahweh is consistent in character and has bound Himself by His attributes.	Deity is not bound by any code of conduct, inconsistent, unpredictable and accountable only marginally to the divine assembly.
Autonomy of deity	Yahweh is not dependent on people for the provision of any needs.	People provided food and housing for deity (sacrifices and temples).
Requirements of deity	Made known in detail through the giving of the Law.	Not revealed; could only be inferred from one's fortunes.
Response to deity	Yahweh expects conformity to the Law and to His holiness and justice.	Ritualistic, though maintaining an ordered society was important.
Creation of the cosmos	Yahweh undertook and sovereignly executed a cohesive plan of creation.	Accomplished by procreation of the gods, with no directing influence and was organized and established through conflict between the gods.
Human dignity	Derived from being created in the image of God and placed over creation. Yahweh created for people and with people in mind.	Since humans were a bother and an afterthought, created as slaves, dignity derived from the belief that they provided the needs of the gods.
Revelation	Yahweh's will, purposes, and nature were a matter of public record provided by Yahweh.	The will, purposes, and nature of a deity could only be inferred.