

material bearer of the divine name, text was in every sense an appropriate medium for the presencing of deity, despite today's overwhelming focus on the abstract concepts indexed by a text over and against its materiality. The primary function of text in these periods was more artifactual than literary for the majority of the populations in which they exercised authority, and as time passed and their compositional origins faded into obscurity, they would be reinterpreted as divine in origin (cf. Parmenter 2009), further facilitating their conceptualization as media for presencing the divine.

One point of this chapter has been to throw into sharp relief the damage the presentistic dichotomy of book religion can do to the reconstruction of the perspectives of the authors, editors, and consumers of the Hebrew Bible. The prioritization of the law was not a rejection in any sense whatsoever of the material mediation of the divine presence.³² Rather, it was the very deployment of it. It incorporated, in its earliest strata, the very same cultic media to presence the deity that existed in the earliest days of Israel and Judah's worship of YHWH, only altering the conventions as far as necessary to accommodate contemporary circumstances and sensitivities, and to restrict access to the desired authorities. When stelai, too, fell out of favor, other more personal media were incorporated to facilitate access to the Torah and to thus democratize and personalize the central and critical experience that was made available centuries before through corporate temple worship, namely communion with the divine presence.

³² Stavrakopoulou (2013, 228) refers to "the pervasive imaging of Torah as a material entity, rather than solely as abstract 'teaching.'"