

The first-person speech here, according to Timothy Hogue (2019b, 200) helped facilitate “the materialization of Katumuwa’s presence and agency so that he might interact with future users of the monument.” Seth Sanders (2012, 35) also addresses mortuary inscriptions, insisting the shift to first-person address represents an innovation on the form: “The new inscriptions and monuments actually speak on behalf of the dead and make demands for themselves. They are designed to produce the presence of the dead and demand their feeding.”<sup>18</sup>

The Decalogue also begins with first-person speech that identifies the speaker, namely YHWH: “I am YHWH, your deity [’*ānōkī YHWH ’ēlōhēkā*], who brought you up from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery.” The theories of both Sanders and Hogue would suggest this is an adoption of an existing convention intended essentially to presence the speaker. Hogue (2019c) asserts,

The result is an imagined encounter with the projected speaker implied by the pronoun ‘I.’ This process of deictic projection thus conjures a speaker—reembodying them in the imagination of the audience. The opening line of the Decalogue—‘I am Yahweh’—is not a prosaic statement nor even a mere adaptation of royal monumental rhetoric. This statement actually produces the presence of Yahweh in the minds of the readers and hearers of the text. It is a theophany condensed into a formula.

As the opening statement of the Decalogue, these words would have been understood to have been the first inscribed by the deity’s own finger (Exod 31:18) on the tablets of stone (cf. Doak 2014). The tablets would thus be a product of divine rather than human production and the deity’s own first-person speech, in contrast to the golden calf (cf. Exod 32:15–16; Deut 9:8–21).<sup>19</sup> This touches multiple traditional bases for the production of presencing media. As miniature stelai bearing the divine name and the deity’s own words, they are functionally parallel to the stelai mentioned above in Deut 27, and were no doubt also understood to be able to facilitate ritual acts “before YHWH.” The later passages in which the law was to be written in some iteration or another upon (or in the presence of) stelai represent different variations on this shared theme: the law, whether written or spoken, has the power to presence the deity.<sup>20</sup> Even without stelai, the law could be conceptualized as presencing media. Note Neh 8:5–6 describe Ezra opening the book of the law from an elevated position (away from

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<sup>18</sup> See also Radner 2005, 114–55.

<sup>19</sup> Moses goes on to shatter these tablets (Exod 32:19), but Exod 34:1 has YHWH command Moses to carve two new tablets, on which YHWH would again write the words of the law. According to Exod 34:28, however, Moses wrote on the tablets.

<sup>20</sup> See Watts 2016, 21: “the Pentateuch was shaped to lay the basis for Torah scrolls to replace the ark of the covenant as the iconic focus of Israel’s worship.” Cf. Schniedewind 2009, 78–79; Fried 2013.