

obviously substitute Yahweh, Adonai, HaShem, the Lord, Jehovah, or whatever their preference. A bit *more* idiosyncratically, however, I use the term “deity” instead of the gendered terms *god* and *goddess*. I also use gender-neutral pronouns in reference to deity, except where I am quoting secondary literature or other translations of primary sources, or where I am translating texts that are marked for gender. Though it is not unilateral, YHWH’s performance of maleness is in many places central to the rhetorical goals of the biblical authors, and so I will preserve the gendered language of ancient authors (cf. Clines 2021b but also Levinson 2022). Elsewhere, however, if the gender of an individual, divine or human, cannot be clearly demonstrated, I use gender-neutral pronouns. I will do my best to mitigate the ambiguity that can arise from the collision in the same context of singular *they* and distinct plural subjects and pronouns.

Because of the interdisciplinary nature of this book, I am importing some technical terminology from other disciplines that may not be familiar to readers. I have tried to reduce the jargon as much as possible, but there are a number of terms that I have maintained for the sake of economy and specificity. Some of these need explanations. A word I use in the very first sentence of the introduction is *conceptualize*, which is a verb that refers to the production in our minds of concepts, images, or ideas about something (as opposed to words). These concepts and ideas are frequently conventionalized and shared by speakers of a given language within a given society in order to make communication more efficient, and this dynamic frequently influences the way people think and talk about things. I’ll discuss some examples of how this works in more detail in the introduction. There are two other verbs that I will use in the introduction that might cause confusion. The first is *index*. When I use it as a verb, I am referring to the way an object can cue a viewer to some other entity and also store information about that entity. For instance, the great poet (Taylor Swift) once wrote of a former lover who kept a scarf in his drawer because it reminded him of her. The scarf serves to cue the person’s mind to their former lover and to aspects of their presence that the scarf may signify. In that sense, the scarf “indexes” the former lover. Similarly, a cultic object that is intended to represent a specific deity cues the viewer’s mind to that deity and can store information about them, such as their name or deeds, qualities, or relationships or events associated with them.

The last verb that requires some explanation is *presence*. In this book, to presence an agent is to reify their presence, or cause their presence to be manifested, according to someone’s perception. There is overlap between the notions of indexing and presencing, but the latter refers more directly to the generation of the perception of the presence of someone or something. I will discuss this cognitive mechanism in more detail in the first chapter, but as a simple example, that great poet mentioned that the former lover kept her scarf because it smelled like her. Smell is strongly linked to memory, and the former lover likely