

of this agency was far more elaborate and institutionally supported in the larger and more complex nations surrounding Israel and Judah, that rationalizing was not necessary for the underlying conceptual frameworks to be operative. The sharing of a ritual meal with stelai, and other social interactions with the object, whether they were commissioned with complex rituals, a simple anointing, or perhaps without any ritual at all, would have facilitated the perception of divine presence for the majority of sympathetic participants. While the final section focused on the most explicit manifestations known from the worlds of Iron Age Israel and Judah, any degree of a deity's agency could potentially be facilitated through appropriate media, from a portion of its power or authority all the way up to the primary locus of the deity's own self.

The perception (perhaps rationalization) of clay/terracotta and of stone as particularly effective conduits for divine agency may help explain the ubiquity of divine images crafted from those materials during the early first millennium BCE. The abandonment of metal and other costlier materials and complex processes around the tenth century BCE was likely the result of market forces, which would have increased the salience of clay and stone as media for the production of divine images, as well as the perception of its suitability and effectiveness. The decreased threat of theft could also have contributed to this perception. As with JPFs, the data are limited that indicate the presencing function of shrine models and cult stands, but the presence of the latter in cultic installations, and in connection with figurines, points in the direction of divine presencing, and if shrine models did mobilize the deity for processions, that case is even stronger. This will have more relevance in the discussion of the ark of the covenant in chapter 5, but we now turn to the generic concept of deity in the Hebrew Bible.