abilities must be rooted in a unique ontology, particularly when there is no indication that ontology was a concept with any currency in Iron Age Israel or Judah. Those abilities, when they were attributed to humans, seem to have been rooted, rather, in special relationships to deity or in special dispensations from deity. We do no justice to the literature to impose on the texts our own theologically and philosophically driven prescriptiveness regarding what the word "deity" is allowed to mean. A clearer understanding of how these entities fit into the conceptual category of deity for ancient Israel and Judah demands a careful interrogation of the conceptual structures that constituted and shaped the category, and it is to that interrogation that I now turn.

THE CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURES OF DEITY

In this section I will propose a semantic base for deity and identify the main conceptual domains and profiles that would have been activated in the minds of hearers/readers/viewers when the concept of deity was evoked. Identifying these structures in a sense separates out the different interpretive lenses through which deity was conceptualized, allowing a more careful interrogation of the category and its constituent elements. Because the conceptual structures discussed in this section will be among the most broadly representative of deity, they stretch across the full chronological range of the Hebrew Bible, but I will discuss dating and change where relevant.

The discussion to this point provides a much broader semantic range for the concept of deity than is generally recognized by scholars, but as we saw above with "mother," not every occurrence of the word evoked that entire semantic range. Different semantic fields within it would have had different degrees of salience depending on the region, the time period, and the contexts of the usage. Those contexts signaled to the hearer/reader/viewer which profiles were activated, which semantic domains were to be prioritized, and how they were to be configured. That process must build on a conceptual base, however, and I suggest that base derived from the intuitive frameworks outlined in the first chapter. That chapter argued that the early Israelites and Judahites, including those involved in the composition, editing, and transmission of the biblical texts, conceptualized deity according to the intuitive frameworks that are still operative in the conceptualization of deity today. As a result, I propose UNSEEN AGENCY as the semantic base for deity in the Hebrew Bible.[26]

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[26] I use small caps to identify bases and domains and scare quotes to identify profiles.