7.
YHWH's Divine Agents:
Texts

One final and perhaps unexpected means of materially encountering deity in ancient Israel and Judah that grew out of the rhetorical machinations of cultic authorities is that of text, and particularly the text of the law (Stavrakopoulou 2013; Watts 2016; 2017). The materiality of text has been acknowledged a number of times already in this book for methodological purposes, but I have not addressed the fact that that materiality facilitated important sociomaterial roles for texts in Israel and Judah (cf. Levy 2012, Mandell and Smoak 2016). Writing as a material technology had been in use for many generations by the time of the authors and editors of the D source, but the literary innovations and expansions that began with their project signal a new and expansive significance (Polaski 2007; Levtow 2012). While those innovations and expansions increased the social capacity for abstraction, imagination, and memory (Schaper 2007, 2019), this in no way suppressed the fundamentally material nature of the medium of writing, and in many ways expanded its flexibility and utility in that regard. Texts themselves could still function as cultic media, both as constituent elements of other media and as media in their own right. To demonstrate this continued function and its utility, this chapter will interrogate two broad categories of texts that performed presencing functions for unseen agency in general and for YHWH more specifically. The first section will look at amulets, inscriptions, and other texts often referred to as "magical" in the scholarship,[1] and the second will interrogate the text of the law of Moses (in its various iterations).

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[1] *Magic* is a notoriously difficult category, but it falls under the rubric of unseen agency. Similar to the way we may describe the word *cult* as a pejorative label for "a religion I don't like," magic largely originates as a pejorative label for (according to my theoretical framework) "unseen agency I don't like." It has since been rationalized in a variety of ways in relation to the Hebrew Bible (Milgrom 1991, 42–43; Schmitt 2008; Cohn 2008, 21–24; Bohak 2008; Stökl 2012, 8). Further consideration of the term is outside the scope of this book, but would benefit greatly from interrogation through the methodological frameworks discussed here (see, for example, Czachesz 2013).