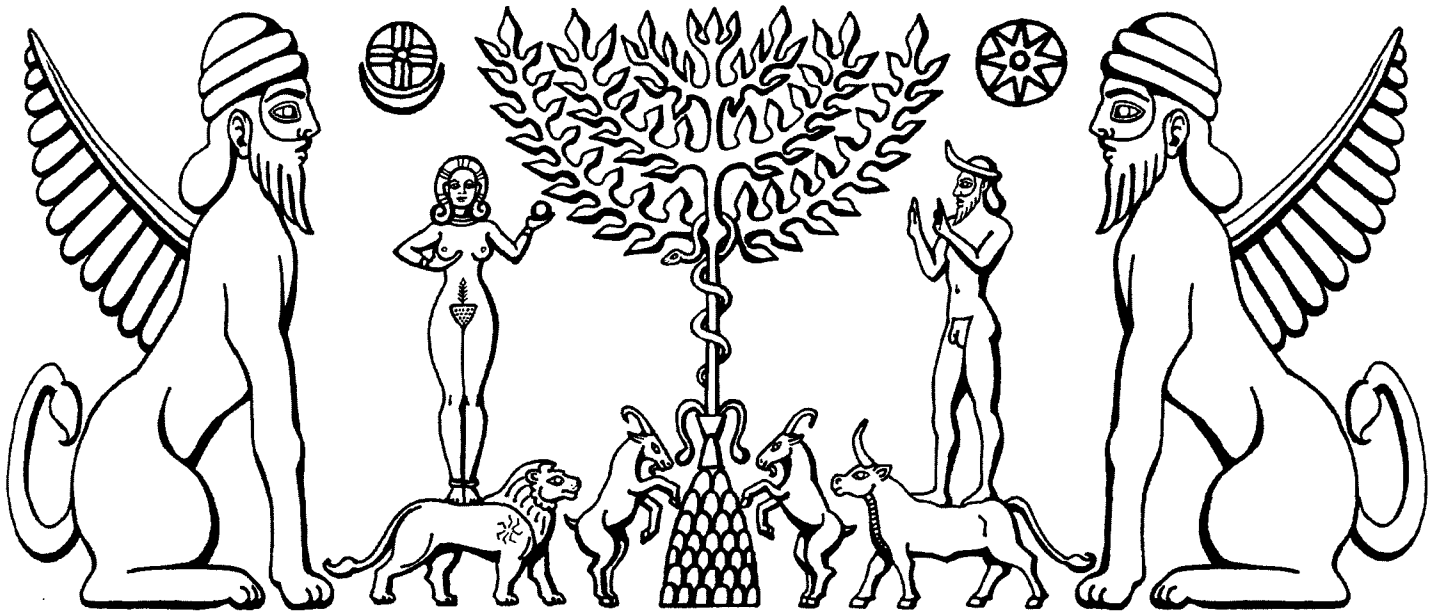


Eve's Ritual



The Judahite Sacred Marriage Rite

by
Stéphane Beaulieu



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395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
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ISBN: 978-0-494-40814-8

Our file Notre référence

ISBN: 978-0-494-40814-8

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Eve's Ritual: The Judahite Sacred Marriage Rite

Stéphane Beaulieu

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (History and Philosophy of Religion) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

December 2007

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ABSTRACT

Eve's Ritual: The Judahite Sacred Marriage Rite

Stéphane Beaulieu

There are many elements at play in the Genesis story of the Garden of Eden, all of which instigated a multitude and diverse range of interpretations. However, the text has only rarely been interpreted as possibly having a link to an ancient ritual. Remarkably, all of the elements present in the tale of Adam and Eve can be found in several Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean sources, many of which have been interpreted as being associated with rituals.

What I propose for this thesis is that the written account of the Eden narrative could be both a record of an historical ritual, and an attempt to standardize a choice women's rite of passage that was used to attain an exalted status within the Israelite religious and social institutions.

For this, I investigate the development of the sacred marriage ritual in the nations surrounding Israel by defining its history, its purpose, and its main religious experts. I then explore the Israelite religious landscape around the time the text was composed to find the proper circumstances that would lend themselves to the existence of a Judahite sacred marriage rite akin to that of these other ancient cultures. Finally, using a comparative approach to the Eden text, that mainly relies on the Ritual School, I briefly explore the many elements at play in the tale and define their purpose in the ritual.

Table of Content

| | |
|--|-----|
| <u>List of Maps:</u> | vi |
| <u>List of Figures:</u> | vii |
| <u>Introduction:</u> | 1 |
| <u>Development:</u> | 5 |
| 1. <i>Methodology:</i> | 5 |
| A. Myth School: | 6 |
| I. Myth Definition. | 7 |
| II. Myth Theories. | 8 |
| B. Myth & Ritual School: | 18 |
| C. Ritual School: | 22 |
| D. Rites of Passage: | 26 |
| I. Van Gennep. | 27 |
| II. Turner. | 30 |
| III. Eliade. | 32 |
| IV. Note on Women's Ritual. | 37 |
| 2. <i>Ritual:</i> | 39 |
| A. The Sacred Marriage Rite: | 39 |
| I. History of the <i>Hieros Gamos</i> . | 40 |
| II. What the Ritual Entailed. | 47 |
| III. Who Incarnated the Goddess? | 51 |
| a. Priestess. | 51 |
| b. Attendants. | 63 |
| IV. The Purpose of the Rite. | 67 |
| a. New Year Fertility Rite. | 69 |
| b. Coronation Festival. | 76 |
| c. Priestess Promotion Ritual. | 81 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| B. The Judahite Sacred Marriage Rite: | 89 |
| I. Asherah. | 89 |
| a. The Goddess. | 89 |
| b. Part of the Official Cult. | 111 |
| c. Nehushtan. | 125 |
| II. Religious Experts. | 128 |
| a. Kingship. | 128 |
| b. Ladyship. | 135 |
| c. Zadokites. | 145 |
| d. Priestesses. | 148 |
| i. Qedeshot. | 148 |
| ii. Zônot. | 155 |
| III. The Ingathering Festival. | 160 |
| a. Rosh ^c Hodesh. | 161 |
| b. Asif Festival. | 165 |
| i. Rosh ha-Shanah. | 168 |
| ii. Yom Kippur. | 175 |
| iii. Sukkot. | 180 |
| IV. The Eden Narrative. | 186 |
| V. The Ritual Text. | 196 |
| VI. Proposed Reconstruction. | 213 |
| <u>Conclusion:</u> | 219 |
| <u>End Notes:</u> | 222 |
| <u>Bibliography:</u> | 273 |
| <u>Appendix 1; Maps:</u> | 287 |
| <u>Appendix 2; Figures:</u> | 290 |
| <u>Appendix 3; Text:</u> | 315 |

List of Maps

APPENDIX 1

| | |
|---|-----|
| Map 1: Europe and the Near and Middle East | 287 |
| Map 2: Eastern Mediterranean and the Near and Middle East | 288 |
| Map 3: The Levant | 289 |

List of Figures

APPENDIX 2

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: Lovers embracing on a bed | 290 |
| Figure 2: Lesser goddess bring priest to Inanna | 291 |
| Figure 3: Warka Vase | 292 |
| Figure 4: Goddess of the Tree of Life | 293 |
| Figure 5: Athirat/Asherah | 294 |
| Figure 6: Ivory box cover | 295 |
| Figure 7: Gold pendant | 296 |
| Figure 8: The Canaanite goddess Qetesh/Qudshu | 297 |
| Figure 9: Qudshu-Astarte-Anat | 298 |
| Figure 10: Pitcher inscription; 'Elat' | 299 |
| Figure 11: Clay cult stand | 300 |
| Figure 12: Pithos A drawing; Tree of Life | 302 |
| Figure 13: Pithos A drawing; Yahweh and his Asherah | 303 |
| Figure 14: Pillar Figurines | 304 |
| Figure 15: Woman at the Window | 306 |
| Figure 16: Two human figures flanking a tree | 307 |
| Figure 17: Tuthmosis III suckled by Isis in the guise of a sycamore tree | 308 |
| Figure 18: Design from a stone vase | 309 |
| Figure 19: The Anguipede amulet | 309 |
| Figure 20: Goddess of Gagarino | 310 |
| Figure 21: Winged Bull of Heaven | 311 |

Introduction:

Generally speaking, a text is purposely crafted and artfully written by an author with a particular intent and meaning that is expressed in its original language. We must realize that the biblical text of Genesis 2-3 is also a product of a particular time, place, culture, and language, a consideration which has not received enough attention in modern studies. This should not be ignored when offering an interpretation, for the text is both responsive to and reflective of that world. Thus, we should place the Israelite religion in perspective of the ancient Near Eastern world's general patterns, contemporary texts, and religions.¹ With knowledge of the conditions of that world, we can uncover the existence of the text before it was linked to sin and suffering.²

As part of the literary heritage of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, this religious text is one of the world's most famous tales.³ Estimated to have been written roughly around 920 BCE⁴, there are major implications in misreading a text that predates the religious traditions that have appropriated it after a millennium; at least 2000 years of 'dogmatic tradition'⁵ followed this appropriation.⁶ These chapters of Genesis have greatly influenced gender roles and identity in the West. Sexual sinfulness, disobedience, and punishment have long negatively characterized the narrative. The 'human failure' and 'disgraceful actions' of the first human pair have been referred to as having affected all of humanity after them with their 'original sin', to use a Christian term. However, it is surprising to find that Adam and Eve are never cited as examples or moral allegories in the rest of the Hebrew Bible. Considering the history of Israel's repeated disobedience of their god's command, the story offers plenty of occasions to draw such analogies.⁷

There are many elements at play in the Eden story. As an object of study, more than any other episode of the Bible, it enjoys an immense bibliography, which instigated a multitude and diverse range of interpretations.⁸ The traditional dogmatic perspective assumed that the serpent had malicious motives and elicited the human couple's disobedience, that their disobedience was disastrous, that the creator was omnipotent, and that the removal of the couple from the Garden constituted a loss of paradise.⁹ When interpreting the simple yet powerful narrative of Genesis 2-3, it is limiting to give importance only to the theme of disobedience. Doing so would mean that other features of the rich narrative, that were perhaps more significant for the ancient Israelites, may be oversimplified or obliterated.¹⁰ To solely analyze this text as literature, with no regard to its possible ritual and cultic setting, may also lead to a misinterpretation of the text.¹¹ Remarkably, all of the elements present in this tale can be found in several Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean sources, many of which have been interpreted as associated with rituals. There are probably numerous reasons as to why this association has not been made in relation to the biblical text, and I will not speculate on them. In contrast, I intend to demonstrate the applicability of a ritual to the Genesis passage.

To be more precise, I will focus on the main player in the ritual, a novice identified with the personage of Eve. In fact, I argue that she is more than the heroine of the story¹²; she is a representative of priestesses. For this purpose, I will not identify Eve as a personal name, but as the title of a religious expert. Hence, I perceive the ritual imbedded in the Eden narrative to be one which select women underwent in order to attain an exalted status in the religious institution. Further, I will argue that this ritual would have been performed during a specific time in the cyclical year, coinciding with

the events of a major festival in the land, with the aim of fulfilling a larger purpose and demonstrating the importance it played in the society. I intend to present the more mundane and intimate side of the life-cycle ritual, and then put it briefly in perspective of the festival's greater setting. Thus, the written account found in the Bible could be both a record of an historical ritual and an attempt to standardize a choice women's rite of passage within the Israelite society.

A note about myself would seem relevant at this point. I am a young white French Canadian man, who was born into Roman Catholicism, though I have never really practiced this religion and have long ago ceased to find it relevant to my life. With a background in visual arts, I find iconography very important and will present archaeological artefacts to support my research whenever appropriate. Also, as a feminist man, I intend to bring a unique perspective by interpreting the text primarily through Eve. Finally, though I work in translations, my knowledge of various ancient European and Near Eastern religions will prove a helpful tool when comparing the relevant data. Because I will be mostly analyzing themes and symbols, I will not need to read the text in its original biblical Hebrew. However, in some key passage, the Hebrew may be referred to for clarification, at which point I will rely on various scholarly translations and debates, since my knowledge of Hebrew is limited. To sum up, in my thesis, I seek to analyze the Eden tale and understand it as an accompanying piece of literature describing a ritual, of which Eve is a model of a novice. By drawing upon the Myth, the Ritual, and the Myth & Ritual schools, supported by the historical, societal, and religious backgrounds, further enhanced with relevant comparative research, and supplemented with occasional textual analysis, I will attempt to elucidate 'Eve's Ritual'.

I will begin this research by presenting the tools needed to analyze the text. Since I will be looking at the Eden narrative through a mythological and ritual perspective, I will therefore give a brief synopsis of the School of Mythology's history by pointing to different analytical theories present in this discipline. Following this, a brief overview of the Myth & Ritual School's history will be offered. Thirdly, I will give a concise survey of the Ritual School's history before I finally put forward a summary of the key ritual theory upon which I will rely. In this last section I will outline the important features presented by van Gennep, Turner, and Eliade regarding the topic of rites of passage.

The second part of my analysis will consist of a succinct presentation of the historical and religious background of the sacred marriage rite. I will also present the purpose of the ritual and discuss the religious experts involved in its celebration. Once this background established, I will then present a brief socio-religious history of Judah and the Temple in order to better understand the religious atmosphere which shaped the composition of the Eden narrative by the *J* source¹³ circa 920 BCE. Keeping this in mind, I will then shortly investigate the possibility of a sacred marriage rite in the early days of the Israelite monarchy by proposing that the *hieros gamos* ritual was performed during the Asif festival. I then explore what the Asif ritual entailed, consider its purpose, and discuss its religious experts. Finally, I proceed to explore the symbols and language of the Eden narrative (using appropriate notes and commentaries on the text's translation), compare them to those of the sacred marriage rite, and present the narrative as an allegorical description of the ritual. Following this I will superimpose the Eden narrative evidence on to the Asif ritual to present a simulation of how the religious experts might have engaged in the sacred marriage rite.

1. *Methodology:*

It is informative to begin with a brief survey of the major theories that have brought us the Myth, the Myth & Ritual, and the Ritual schools of thought. I will survey here but a few that have been used to analyse the Eden narrative. Although this introduction is far from exhaustive, for there are additional theories in existence, this survey will nonetheless attempt to provide a loose historical framework of the major methods and contributors involved, so as to equip the reader with a mental map that will facilitate further investigation. I have organized this section into four chapters. The first is concerned with the origins and essential nature of the Myth School; the second centres on the Myth & Ritual School; and the third focuses on the Ritual School. The fourth specifically looks at 'rites of passage' with van Gennep's three step theory, Turner's focus on the 'betwixt and between' step, and Eliade's temporal setting of rites.¹⁴ In order to keep the information relevant, I have summarized the theories and used overall generalized points. Finally, in this research I will primarily rely on the Myth & Ritual School with an emphasis on the ritual tripartite theory developed by van Gennep and elaborated by Turner and Lincoln along with Eliade's temporal setting. I will also make use of the comparative approach mixed in with a feminist angle by employing a touch of allegorical, solar-myth, and psychological methods wherever necessary and appropriate.

A. Myth School:

In this brief overview of the Myth school's history, I include a definition of the word *myth*, which has long played a crucial role in biblical scholarship, following which I will present various theories of interpreting myths. The study of myths has been used in other disciplines, especially anthropology, the classics, history, folklore, sociology, and psychology. Competing theories, investigating the myth's central function and meaning in relation to the Bible, have been pursued since approximately the mid 19th century.¹⁵ This followed an important contribution to the scientific study of myth, made available by the discovery and translation of dozens of Mesopotamian and Near Eastern myths, which were startlingly similar to several biblical stories.¹⁶ It was suggested that perhaps most biblical materials were not as historical as previously thought. Instead, the biblical stories perhaps resulted from centuries of orally and communally transmitted traditional tales, a process that led to the Bible's development in much the same way it led to the origin of myths. It was thought, then, that perhaps biblical stories and myths could be subject to the same sort of analysis, which produced the development of a number of methodological models.¹⁷ All these schools of thoughts have been critiqued at great length and were all found lacking on some points to a certain extent. However, it should be remembered that an all-explanatory theory applicable to *all* myths is impossible to develop. Yet, each theory presents helpful tools useful in deciphering certain aspects of a myth or tale. Therefore, one should not discard a theory in its entirety because of a few limitations or flaws. So, as already mentioned, I will be using a few of these theories with cautious restraint in my comparative approach to analyzing the Eden narrative.¹⁸

I. Myth Definition:

Our term *myth* comes from the Greek word *mythos*, which means ‘word’, ‘speech’, ‘tale’, ‘story’, or ‘something said’, regardless as to whether it is true or false.¹⁹ Unfortunately, over time it became a label of something false. This misinterpretation began during the Enlightenment movement with Bernard Fontenelle, who took a detached and disenchanted stance on myth’s definition. He did not see myth as seeking deep, esoteric truths, but as a product of error. Fontenelle shifted from interpreting myth to explaining myth’s origin, and, according to him, it arose from the savagery and ignorance of early human culture.²⁰ The Grimm brothers defined myth as *a story about the gods*. The use of the plural noun ‘gods’ conveniently excluded the Bible and the monotheistic religions that sprung from it. This definition permanently severed mythology from the Bible, and virtually every scholar from the late 19th to the early 20th century adopted this definition as conventional. Along with Gunkel, who insisted that at least two gods were essential to define a myth, von Rad, Wright, Wellhausen, and Robertson Smith are some of the many who applied this reasoning and chose not to examine the Old Testament as mythological texts.²¹

By the close of the 19th century, for many anthropologists, historians of religion, and other such scholars and students of comparative religion, it was widely agreed that myths were an objectified and symbolized worldview of cultures.²² However, seeing myths solely as stories about the gods was beginning to be found inadequate.²³ A demythologization program was begun in the 1940s by the New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976). Bultmann offered a broader definition of myth than the

Grimm brothers.²⁴ Later, F.M. Cross found in Israelite religion a mixture of myth and history that stood in tension. Myths gave a cosmic dimension and transcendent meaning to the historical. Yet, while Cross along with Childs parted with the old notion that there were no myths in the Hebrew Bible, neither accepted the possibility that mythical thought and literature could be at the centre of Israelite religion.²⁵

However, both Mircea Eliade and Paul Ricoeur proposed that mythological narratives related the sacred history of events that happened in the fabled primordial time, and the traditional narratives of myths furnish the language used in ritual actions.²⁶ T.H. Gaster, who also viewed myths as linked to rituals, vaguely defined myth as presenting "... the actual in terms of the ideal."²⁷ Joseph Fontenrose, on the other hand, proposed to define myths as the deeds of all sorts of superhuman or supernatural beings recounted in traditional tales. A review of a variety of contemporary definitions for 'myth' finds three important points in common. A myth, we are to understand, has to: (1) be a story; (2) be traditionally transmitted almost always orally over a long period of time within a communal setting; and (3) feature characters that are more than human. A 4th element can be added, which proposes that a myth recounts the events from the remote past.²⁸

II. Myth Theories:

- a. Euhemerism: Around 300 BCE, the Greek mythographer, novelist, and geographer Euhemerus of Messene understood myths as the glorified history of great humans, royalty, heroes, and advancers of civilization, who became deified and worshiped after death. The transmission of their stories gradually attracted

miraculous elements, until they became legends or myths. Early Christian writers embraced Euhemerus' theory, which allowed them to distinguish between Christ's miraculous acts and the accomplishments of 'false gods'.²⁹

- b. Allegory: *Allegory* is from the Greek, meaning a story taken from its initial frame of reference and put into another in order to say something different, which is similar to symbolism. It was a side effect of Euhemerism, because myths were thought to be embellishment on historical figures. Though some Church fathers rejected allegory, afraid it would continue pagan worship, most found an opportunity to interpret the righteous moral conduct found within these myths.³⁰
- c. Romanticism: In 1861, Johann Bachofen, as a Roman law student, advanced a partly Romantic theory in his *Mother Right*. He theorized that the first stage of human society was ruled by two matriarchal phases; the nomadic hunters under Aphrodite (lunar) and the agricultural and marriage state under Demeter (earthly). Finally, the old and primitive communal 'mother right' was overthrown by the higher values of a third and patriarchal state under Apollo (solar).³¹
- d. Solar Myth: The Romanticism theory partly created the Solar Myth theory. However, it was Friedrich Max Muller (1823-1900), a German-born philologist and professor of modern languages at Oxford University, who speculated that the Aryan race of India invaded the Middle East and Europe in remotest antiquity. When these Indo-Europeans lost their language, it caused confusion, in which

nouns became interpreted as names for gods and goddesses, while natural phenomena revealed accounts of their wars, loves, and other such activities. Seeing an allegorical struggle between sunlight and darkness in most myths, he presented the theory known as ‘solar mythology’.³²

- e. Linguistics: After further analysis of the Aryan/Indo-European migration, the mythologists argued that myths and language were passed on together. This is how the Linguistic theory came to its own. The French scholar George Dumézil (1898-1986) refined this interpretation in the mid 20th century. Based on the roles that some deities play in the Indo-European myths, he correlated three hypothetical original classes in Indo-European society as being those of rulers and priests, warriors, and food producers.³³
- f. Etiology: This proto-scientific theory, developed by the 1st century BCE Roman historian Sallust, was an attempt to understand, explain, and accept how humans fit within the limits of their natural, cosmic, and social worlds.³⁴ This view is called *etiological*, derived from the Greek word for cause; *aitia*. By replacing *etiological* with the adjective *explanatory*, we find an applicable theory.³⁵ The Stoics believed that ‘the true meaning of a word’ or ‘name’, properly interpreted, for example Cronus as *chronos*, could illustrate the meaning of a myth and reinforce an allegory. The etiology theory re-emerged in the 19th century.³⁶

- g. Animism: E.B. Tylor (1832-1917) founded the 'intellectualist' theory, which traces the evolutionary states of human societies and parallels it with the biological evolution of a species. He is also credited with co-founding anthropology. Finally, Tylor also put forth the idea that myth is a mistaken science or philosophy originating in the belief that everything had a living soul (*anima*). Once endowed with a soul, these inanimate objects and phenomena were eventually deified and worshiped through fear and ignorance.³⁷
- h. Mythopoeic: While logical or rational thoughts attempt to explain phenomena, according to the French anthropologist Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1857-1939), mythopoeic thought seeks to be expressive, active, mystical, and participatory with phenomena. Following Levy-Bruhl, H. and H.A. Frankfort wrote *Myth and Reality* and also argued that mythical thought is not analytical but participatory. It should be noted that near the end of his life, Levy-Bruhl abandoned this theory. Surprisingly, the theory of mythopoeic and pre-logical thoughts is frequently used by the most recent biblical scholarship, while anthropologists, philosophers, and others have abandoned it. Perhaps the only positive comment about this theory is that it proposed that myths were a special and distinctive form of human expression that requires a distinctive mode of explanation.³⁸
- i. Functionalism & Charter: The Functional theory proposed a connection between myths and the social institutions, rather than with the cosmic. Following William Robertson Smith (1846-1894), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Bonislaw

Malinowski (1884-1942) argued that religion and myths were primarily practical and social and brought different people together to form a community, while strengthening individuals within their social structures. Thus, myths should be interpreted as 'charters', because they create, confirm, safeguard, and enforce the shared moral values and covenantal identity by codifying the community's traditional social bonds. Myths also define societal membership, land distribution, and ritual procedure.³⁹

- j. Psychological: It has been observed that, though myths are not entirely alike, they are not entirely distinct. Since Antiquity, there have been theoretical attempts to account simultaneously for the similar, universal motifs and the specific dissimilarities of individual myths. Some motifs, like 'the flood' or 'the hero cycle', recur in myths from widely different sources. The psychological theory's strength is its ability to account for similarities. Like the functionalists, who saw myths as creating social stability, the psychologists saw myths as releasing tension between the individual and society. Social drives cannot be acted out, since doing so would destroy the community. So myths, like dreams, offer an escape, a release from this tension, to creatively express these drives. There are two distinct versions of this theory representing two different thinkers: Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Carl Jung (1875-1961).⁴⁰

- i. *Freud*: His theories on myth are related to his research on dreams. He perceived dream symbols as unconscious projections of an individual's instinctive

drives, which correlates with elements of the waking world. If dreams are psychological symptoms of tensions affecting individuals suffering from mental diseases or 'neuroses', then myths are humanity's collective and recurrent dreams.⁴¹ Among Freud's other contributions is the Oedipus complex, though Jung contributed the term *complex*.⁴² Oedipus' story illustrated for Freud a basic pattern; the son kills the father and takes the mother. From this pattern, he put forth a theory of humanity's archaic heritage. Originally humans were a primal horde, to be understood as the sons of an oppressive father; they rose up against him, expelled or killed him, and claimed his wives. Through guilt they rejected the women, which led to the triumph of patriarchy and established a totem system that used a sacred animal to substitute for the father. From this sin and guilt emerged the deification of the father figure into the concept of 'God', who must be appeased. Freud concluded that the Oedipal drama was the inspiration for religion, ethics, art, and society.⁴³ Thus, for him, any stories describing dragon slayers marrying maidens are variations of the Oedipus complex.⁴⁴

ii. *Jung*: For Jung, the unconscious is a collective phenomenon, and the drives it produces are a 'spiritual desire' for meaning. This unconscious is an irrational phenomenon, leading Jung to believe that rational attempts of logically explaining myths are misguided and even impossible, for myths and dreams are primarily expressive 'instinctual tendencies'. Thus, myths, like dreams and folktales, contain timeless recurrent 'archaic' elements, which he labelled *archetypes*. The Oedipus complex was, for Jung, the first discovered archetype. These symbolic

representations, or 'myth-forming' structural elements, Jung believed, represent behavioural patterns and symbols developed over thousands of years. Since myths were created from these archetypes, they could be used to interpret the projection of society's psychic tendencies emerging from the 'collective unconscious'. He described the collective unconscious as embracing socio-political matters, while the personal unconscious was limited to the concerns of an individual. So myths are inherent in the collective dreams of humans. Though these representations can vary in detail, they preserve their basic form throughout the development of a story or a situation.⁴⁵

- k. Structuralism: In its purest form, structural analysis is the theory of a single scholar, Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-).⁴⁶ He borrowed structural analysis from the language theory developed by the Genevan linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and applied it to myth. Saussure perceived that language was composed of isolated and meaningless phonetic signs called *phonemes*, which took form and significance only when combined with and opposed to other *phonemes*. Similarly, Lévi-Strauss examined the relationship between two opposing elements or binary opposites in the myth, which he called *mythemes*, and these are analyzed in relation to other *mythemes*, regardless of their order in the 'surface structure' or narrative of the myth. The purpose of myth, then, is to provide a mode by which the human mind can react to the world and escape unpleasant contradictions by resolving conflicting opposites, such as life and death, nature and culture, raw and

cooked, and so on.⁴⁷ Ritual is therefore a mediation or reaction, which helps amend irreconcilable conflicts that would be intolerable otherwise.⁴⁸

1. Narratology: A subcategory of Structuralism was developed by the Russian folklorist Vladimir J. Propp (1895-1970), who, basing his theory on Russian folktales, arrived at a different structural view of myth, which always occurs in an unchanging linear sequence. Propp detailed a plot system based on a structure of individual units, which he called *motifemes*. His theory proves helpful when comparing myths that appear unrelated. He also proposed a simple structure common to the mothers of heroes, which he called the 'girl's tragedy' consisting of five *motifemes*: (1) the girl passes from childhood to adulthood and leaves the home; (2) she then lives in seclusion; (3) surprised by a god, she is impregnated; (4) because of this she suffers humiliation and punishment or an unpleasant outcome; finally (5) she is delivered from her suffering and her son is born.⁴⁹ Propp concluded that these sequences matched those of initiation rituals.⁵⁰ Using Propp's 'girl's tragedy' as inspiration, Walter Burkert (1931-) proposed a 'program of action', which corresponds to biological or cultural realities that naturally occur in a girl's life, such as puberty, defloration, pregnancy, and delivery.⁵¹ Burkert emphasized the importance of structure in the study of myth, because the identity of a tale is maintained by this partly invisible structure, which makes it possible for us to say that, despite their differences, Homer's and Sophocles' version of the Oedipus story are both referring to the same myth. The changing cultural and historical dimensions, Burkert insists against Lévi-Strauss'

argument, must always be taken into account in order to discover the structure of traditional tales and their different collective meanings.⁵²

m. Comparative: Used repeatedly by anthropologists, the most successful approach to analyze myth may be the comparative theory, which cross-references the myths of different cultures to unveil similar and reoccurring elements.⁵³ Because of its literary value, Greek mythology was often considered unusual and apart from other mythologies. The same was thought of the Bible. Yet the structuralists-narratologists have had some success in showing that classical myths have fundamental characteristics in common with traditional tales everywhere. They also discovered that some myths are rooted in other cultures, or are at least influenced by other mythologies.⁵⁴ This theory sprung from Sir J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which catalogued a long list of data on kingship and ritual, as we shall see below, laying the groundwork for comparisons to be made.⁵⁵ There are three main stands of analysis in the comparative approach; the 'diffusionary' mythology, which charts the transmission of myths over geographical and cultural areas; the 'polygenesis', which studies the spontaneous generations of myths based on similarities; and the 'monogenesis', which understands myths as traceable to a common ancestry through language, society, and culture.⁵⁶

n. Feminism: Scholars from this school approached mythology from a woman's perspective by studying the female characters and interpreting their psychological and social situation. According to Johanna H. Stuckey, who elaborates on Carol

Christ, there are four categories of feminist studies; revisionist, renovationist, revolutionist, and rejectionist. The 'revisionists', dating from the first-wave feminists (1800s), were concerned with revising the texts by replacing male-centred language with neutral language. This emancipation allowed women to liberate and reclaim the texts, by presenting them as complements and counterparts to those of the men. The 'renovationists', also dating to the first-wave, tended to alter the texts to include women, in an attempt to balance the male-female dynamics and rid the text of sexism. This theory, like structuralism, focused on society and the human mind's binary opposites in order to find the place of women in the male-centred text. The 'revolutionists', dating to the second-wave feminists (starting in the 1960s), used many methodologies, especially the comparative approach, by incorporating traditions from other cultures in an attempt to reclaim an ancient pre-patriarchal heritage. Some used Propp's structural narratology with the deconstructionist theory, adding psychology and comparative anthropology when interpreting traditional tales. The 'rejectionists', also from the second-wave, did not attempt to amend the traditional interpretation of texts, which they considered irreparably sexist. Rather, they rejected it and set about to create a new feminist tradition. These various feminist interpretations critically rethought the psychological and social assumptions of myths, which led to original and stimulating analysis.⁵⁷

B. Myth & Ritual School:

According to this theory, myth's *function* is to articulate the significance of the ritual. Its *method* is to keep the order of the ceremony. Its *effect* is to transform a presentation into a *representation*, by introducing the elements of action and actors who are leaders and impersonators in a ritual.⁵⁸ William Robertson Smith was one of the earliest theorists to suggest that myths are better understood in relation to rituals.⁵⁹ His analytical method argued that, in the course of human history, ritual arose first as the primary component of religion, and myth derived from and was attached to it as an attempt to explain old religious rites. Thus, by the time the myth was composed, the original meaning of the ritual was forgotten, and the text became the sole evidence of the ritual. He concluded that the ritual was fixed and therefore obligatory, while faith in the myth, being a variable, was at the discretion of the worshiper. So ritual has the responsibility of creating and maintaining the community.⁶⁰ In the late nineteenth century, Robertson Smith moved to Cambridge University, and founded the early Myth & Ritual School. Several British scholars promoting this theory are often grouped together and identified as the 'Cambridge School' of myth-ritualist. Belonging to this 'school' are the anthropologist Sir James George Frazer (1854-1941), the classicists Jane Ellen Harrison (1859-1920), F.M. Cornford (1874-1943), A.B. Cook (1868-1952), and Gilbert Murray (1866-1957), to name but a few.⁶¹

Robertson Smith's investigation of ritual laid the groundwork for the Myth & Ritual School and for his student, Sir James G. Frazer, who was concerned with the origin of religion.⁶² Though interested in beliefs, his research into ritual customs became

his life work. Frazer also saw myth as secondary to ritual, which is the source of many forms of cultural expressions. He explored this concept in his book, *The Golden Bough*, which was based on the story of the King of the Wood. The ruler of the grove of Aricia could be challenged at any time. He who killed the king would reign. Before the duel, the challenger broke off a 'golden bough' from the sacred tree. This became the title of Frazer's book.⁶³ In successive editions of his *Golden Bough*, Frazer elaborated on Robertson Smith's notion of the divine totem ritual sacrifice. The King of the Wood was understood as embodying and ensuring the fertility of the realm. Frazer theorized that this story arose from an underlying universal pattern explaining a real ritual; that of a king whose waning power threatened the well-being of the people. Thus, as embodying fertility, the weak king had to die and be replaced by a young, viril successor. Many myths recount the death and resurrection of kings or gods, based on the symbolic ritual pattern re-enacted to secure the fertility of the land and its people. Frazer searched the world for evidence to support his thesis and catalogued customs that evoked this theme, resulting in a twelve-volume 3rd edition of *The Golden Bough*. Attis, Adonis, Osiris, and Dionysus are some of the many depictions of this pattern.⁶⁴ This ritually dying- and reviving-god theme became, according to Frazer, the basis of all myth and folklore.⁶⁵

Together, Robertson Smith and Frazer were the two inspirational poles for the Myth & Ritual School. Their basic tenets on the historical and cultural approach to ritual were later divided into three branches. One approach was the psychological school, mentioned above. It adopted the social origins of religious authority, guilt, and morality with its notions of totemism and primal sacrifice.⁶⁶ Biblical and ancient Near Eastern specialists, like Samuel Henry Hooke (1874-1968) and Theodore H. Gaster (1906-1992),

were responsible for widely applying the Myth & Ritual theory. Hooke argued that in early civilizations, myth, which is said, and ritual, which is done, were inseparable.⁶⁷ Gaster affirmed that Near Eastern myths reflected the pattern and sequence of ritual acts characterizing major seasonal festivals across the world. Both Gaster and Jane E. Harrison (1850-1928) developed a sequential framework, which suggested that myths began by accompanying the original ritual. Over time, however, the ritual tended to disappear, leaving the myths severed from their context to independently continue in various forms.⁶⁸ Harrison further argued that the myth might account for its own existence by attaching itself to historical figures, events, or phenomena. In *Themis*, Harrison's argument cemented the Cambridge school theory.⁶⁹ The debate over which came first, myth or ritual, led to the creation of the phenomenologists. They favoured myth as the originator, concluding that when it started to degenerate it attached itself to ritual.⁷⁰ Lord Raglan (1885-1964), on the other hand, modified the 'ritual-leads-to-myth' motif by suggesting that myths survived as stories without reattaching themselves to ritual as Harrison had suggested.⁷¹

The majority of Myth & Ritual theorists held a more moderate position, as Hecker proposed. He concluded that myth and ritual are independent in origin.⁷² Some proposed that the ritual must be determined before anyone can understand the accompanying myth. This branch saw ritual as the source of both religion and culture. Emile Durkheim is associated with this sociological approach. For him, religion was socially created to preserve the wellbeing of society.⁷³ Others further presented myth and ritual as two aspects of one phenomenon, their origin being trifling. Since the ritual acts out what the myth says and both possess equal 'potency', they should always be studied

together. Supporting this view, Robert Graves (1895-1985) said that myth implies ritual, and vice versa, and both appear together as parallel expressions of a culture's religious life. Further, the Myth & Ritual School argued that most of the Near Eastern and Mediterranean myth-ritual complexes derived from a similar ritual pattern, leading them to seek rituals everywhere. They understood that a myth or a ritual rarely remained unchanged over a long period of time without the actions and the story separating. This gave rise to various combinations of distinct religious and dramatic genres.⁷⁴

Many myth-ritualists favour the pattern of (1) conflict, (2) disaster or death, (3) lamentation, and (4) rebirth, also called 'patternism'.⁷⁵ Assembling the evidence for this theory caused an ambitious analysis of the religions of ancient Egypt, India, Mesopotamia, and Canaan. These Near Eastern cultures were thought as ritual religions, centred on the Frazerian dramatization of the 'dying-god cycle'.⁷⁶ Joseph Campbell (1904-1987), known for his theory of a 'monomyth' underlying all myths and cultural developments, proposed that the patterns of the dying-god, echoed in the 'hero cycle', corresponded to the initiation ritual patterns. The hero's journey is composed of basic stages, such as (1) a separation from the world for a distant land, (2) a brush with death, (3) the slaying of a monster, (4) an erotic encounter and discovery of a great power, and finally (5) a life-enhancing succeeding of the father once returned from the journey. These correspond to (1) the initiates' removal from society, (2) their symbolic death, (3) an encounter with demons, (4) an erotic encounter, and finally (5) their return as adults.⁷⁷ Graves also discerned that these ritual events are pictorially recorded on temple walls, vases, seals, bowls, mirrors, chests, shields, tapestries, and so on.⁷⁸

C. Ritual School:

The Ritual School began with Freud, who theorized in his 'Oedipus Complex' that primordial brothers, consumed by the guilt of killing their father, attempted to undo their crime by renouncing his women, an incest taboo that extended to all sexual relations within the totemic group. This primordial patricide resulted in the totemic cult with its taboos against the killing of the sacred totem, the substitute father. The cult originated in desire and murder, yet promoted guilt and repressed desire. It developed into a complex form of religion with the deification of the primal father and the sacrificial rite of communion. It is clear that, in the Freudian interpretation, taboos are inseparable from ritual practices. These taboos emphasize the therapeutic values of ritual, when participants act out and appease the obsessive internal neurotic mechanism of culturally repressed desires; an argument that both Jung and Lévi-Strauss would agree with.⁷⁹

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and the Functionalists theorized that, by living and acting within a social group, an individual is periodically provided with opportunities to experience the transcendent power of the collective. Using myths to explain and amplify the rituals, these dramatized rites arouse the feeling of attachment within the community by bringing the group together as a collective. The emotional response to the narration and the performance also confirms the belief system of the individual.⁸⁰ Durkheim presented 'God' as society, an idea which was echoed by Freud, who suggested that 'God' was the tribal father.⁸¹ Marcel Mauss (1873-1950) furthered Durkheim's theory by emphasizing that, though they do not define each other, one must analyze the relationship between religion and the total social phenomenon. Alfred Reginald

Radcliffe-Brown (1881-1955) also developed Durkheim's view of religion as social phenomenon.⁸²

Observing the difficulty that rituals have in actually achieving organized social unity, Max Gluckman (1911-1975) suggested that they affirm unity despite exaggerating complex social conflicts. He focused on rites in which rules of authority are temporarily overturned, also known as 'rituals of rebellion'. Gluckman suggested that these 'rituals of rebellion' function by channelling the structural conflict and releasing the tensions by limiting and diffusing the real threat created by discontent, all the while reinforcing the social status quo by acknowledging it as normative. Ultimately, Gluckman defined ritual as related to the symbolic enactment of social relationships in all their ambiguity, tension, and strife, while religious activities stood at the other extreme. His definition of ritual parted from Durkheim's notion that rites were concerned with the religious or 'the sacred'. Thus, the term 'ritual' could refer to a wide range of formalized activities.⁸³

Although a ritual conveys the social group's basic information, for Edmund Leach (1910-1989), it is used primarily to transform one category into another, for example, a child into an adult or an animal into a gift for the gods. Thus, a ritual makes it possible for categories, such as the sacred and the profane, to impinge on each other in a transitory stage, called 'liminality' by van Gennep and after him Turner, while maintaining the integrity of the distinct categories, and yet shaping the reality outside its boundaries. Leach also presented ritual as a nonverbal form of communication, resembling Lévi-Strauss' Structuralism theory, only here applied to rituals instead of myths by re-describing van Gennep's basic points.⁸⁴ On the other hand, Roy Rappaport (1926-1997) perceived a 'systems analysis', in which ritual claimed authority from tradition and the

divine to maintain the system. Further, he argued that maintaining the ecological ritual is very important because people believe in tradition much more than in economic advisors or ecological managers when physical resources are at stake.⁸⁵ A variety of studies of ritual, such as ecological, ethnological, biogenetic, and psychological, can be loosely grouped under one umbrella theory known as the 'neofunctional' form of 'systems analysis'. They testify to the enduring value of functionalist concerns by exploring the various ways that ritual activity relates to social life, regulates the community, and enhances the individual well being.⁸⁶

Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) rejected the social view and proposed that religion was rooted in individual experiences. He defined public rituals as magic, which has the social function to command and manipulate situations and comes into play as a natural emotional reaction when faced with uncertainty, in order to alleviate anxiety when skills and technical knowledge cannot guarantee success. Magical technique is a means to an end; by contrast, religious rituals and worship are ends in themselves, seeking an authentic communicative relationship with the spirits, ancestors, or gods that addresses emotional or psychological needs.⁸⁷ The distinction between magic and worship correlates to direct and indirect rites. Direct rites, like curses or spells, are designed to produce immediate results by themselves. On the other hand, indirect rites, like vows and prayers, set in motion some personified power, such as demons, djinns, or deities, to intervene on behalf of the performer of the rite.⁸⁸ As for Frazer, despite attributing magic to 'primal humans', he attempted to understand the reasoning behind its use. He found two types of magical practices: first, 'imitative magic' or 'homeopathy' applies the law of similarity, where 'like produces like', for example, to pour water

encourages rain; the other is known as 'contagion', which works under the principle that things that were once in contact still affect each other even after being separated, as, for instance, harming a piece of hair causes pain to the person whose hair it was.⁸⁹

Generally speaking, the various types of initiations that have been distinguished by the history of religion belong to three categories. The 1st consists of collective rituals that are obligatory for all members of a particular society and which result in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Their function is to provide the adolescents with access to the sacred, to knowledge, and to sexuality by which they become fully human. Ethnologists refer to these rituals as 'life transition', 'puberty rites', 'tribal initiation', or 'initiation into an age group'. The 2nd category is composed of initiation into special groups or 'secret societies', named 'status enhancement' rites. These include religious associations, totem clans, castes, political and/or territorial community, and so on, many of which are very secretive and usually limited to one sex. Very few societies are open to both sexes in primal cultures.⁹⁰ Finally, the 3rd category of initiation is a specialized type, which certain individuals undergo to transcend their human condition and is connected with mystical vocations, for example, medicine man or shaman, as found in primal religions. A specific characteristic of this category is the personal aspect of the experience, during which the initiate becomes a protégé of the Supernatural Beings, or, as in some cases, even their equal. Those undergoing this kind of initiation participate in a restricted yet more intense religious experience.⁹¹

D. Rites of Passage:

Rites of passage are also known as initiation rituals. The word 'initiation' derives from the Latin *in ire*, 'to enter into', and denotes a sense of movement from one space to another, which gives us a model of individuation process, emphasized by sanctification, naming, 'going up to the sacred chamber', acquiring special dress or insignia, eating a communion meal, and so on.⁹² Van Gennep wrote that "life itself means to separate and to be reunited, to change form and condition, to die and to be reborn."⁹³ Though we can explain them, facts of life remain mysteries simply by being more than we can grasp. For example, theologians may cushion the event of birth with deep thoughts, preachers may embellish it with stories, doctors may present the inexplicable as simple, and scientists may explain the chemistry behind it, but birth is still a mystical event. Birth, like death and other such stages of life, remains inflexible, and faced with this, we ritualize.⁹⁴ Thus, in most cultures, a series of major or minor rituals, referred to as 'life-crisis' or 'life-cycle' rituals, intersperse an individual's social life by dramatizing a wide range of events, such as birth, puberty, marriage, parenthood, initiation into religious societies, death, and so on. Denoting a body of rites and oral teachings, initiation alters a person's religious and social status from which the novice emerges as a totally different being.⁹⁵

Also, secular cultures may mark certain events with a few rites, while more traditional or religious societies may be enveloped in a multitude of ritual obligations. Though a rite of passage is composed of three stages, its extent or significance may vary from one individual or ritual to another. For example, in pregnancy and betrothal rituals, the liminal state is emphasized, while rites of separation in funeral ceremonies and rites

of incorporation at marriages are more prominent and elaborate. In addition, if the elaboration of the stage is sufficient, an independent state is created where the three phases take place within this one stage.⁹⁶ While rites of passage may be loosely linked to biological changes, they often depict socio-cultural reference points, invented to provide markers to break up life. Without being identical to the natural biological order, they overlay it so that its hardship can be endured and even transformed. These rites are the most important culturally stylized crises, since they reinforce a society's belief in the reality and naturalness of a stage.⁹⁷ For example, birth rites are not celebrated at the child's emergence from the mother, nor do initiation rites coincide with pubescent hormonal changes. "Indeed, life-cycle rituals seem to proclaim that the biological order is less determinative than the social."⁹⁸ Physical birth or the appearance of facial hair or menses is one thing, only the community can properly identify and recognize a member of the social group, and it does so in its own time.⁹⁹ In this section, I will discuss van Gennepe's *Tripartite* theory, Turner's *Betwixt and Between*, and Eliade's *In Illo Tempore*.

I. Van Gennepe:

Arnold van Gennepe (1873-1957) attempted to demonstrate the universality of certain patterns within all rituals in his *Rites of Passage* work. In an appeal to the Myth & Ritual School, van Gennepe took a fresh look at the life, death, and rebirth symbolism and argued for the commonality of the three-stage pattern within many traditions. However, van Gennepe criticized the Frazerian tendency of using brief examples of rituals collected from around the world and discussed outside their contexts. For van Gennepe,

rites have meaning only when understood in their original social setting and sequence of preceding and following events, which is the principle of his 'sequential method'.¹⁰⁰ Thus, as part of his study, he collected many examples of rites with basic ceremonial patterns accompanying life crises. In these rites he noticed alterations that happen when a society is threatened by chaotic social changes. Spatial movement occurs during these critical moments in an individual's life. This movement is used to signal growth from one status to another in social identity, while maintaining the integrity of the social order.¹⁰¹ This reflects the relation between social structures and social changes.¹⁰² So, under Frazerian influence, van Gennep demonstrated that all rituals are rites of passage, which display a three-stage sequence: a 'rite of separation', a marginal 'rite of transition' (or *limen*, meaning 'threshold' in Latin), and a 'rite of incorporation' or aggregation.¹⁰³

Through the first stage of these rites, a person or a group symbolically leaves an identity by being detached from a social grouping or a set of cultural conditions. This is orchestrated as a physical removal from the rest of the world or a fixed point in the social structure defined as the 'before'. Accordingly, this 'preliminal' phase is accompanied by special ceremonies of purification in order to prevent pollution and maintain the untainted state of the passage once it has been purified. A physical change of appearance affects the person through bathing, shaving the hair, switching clothes, and/or marks being made on the body. Accompanying these purification rites is also the symbolic allusion to trances, death, voyages of the soul, in effect the loss of the old identity.¹⁰⁴

The threshold separates the foreign or profane from the domestic or sacred worlds, depending on whether it grants access to secular or a holy dwelling. This portal appears to be a way to create and redefine a social and personal status. Logically, only

the main door is the site of entrance and exit (other openings do not qualify), perhaps because a special rite consecrates it, or because it faces a favourable direction. Thus, rites of entering and exiting, which are either identical or exactly reversed, accompany it. Ritually passing between two halves of an object, two branches, gates, doors, arches, or under something, should be interpreted as transition rites accompanied by rites of separation at the time of departure from one world and by rites of incorporation once the threshold is crossed and the new world is entered. Upon exit, the features acquired by the celebrants who carried out the terminating rites are instantly removed.¹⁰⁵ The sacred space can also be ended, which van Gennep defined as the 'pivoting of the sacred'. Hence, ritual defines the sacred rather than being already fixed and always existing.¹⁰⁶ The residing 'guardians of the threshold' mediate or enforce interdictions, symbolized as taboos against entrance at the frontier of the sacred space. These are divinities of monumental proportions, such as Hermes and Priapus in Greece, the sphinx in Egypt, the *kudurru* (winged dragons) in Assyro-Babylonia, or even the *kerubim* in Canaan. According to van Gennep, there is almost a universal association between the upright rock or boundary marker of the sacred space and the erect phallus, though it has no sexual significance. Pointed objects, like horns, fingers, and swords, protect because of their power to 'pierce'. However, the threshold as a connecting point between two spaces echoes the sexual act or penetration.¹⁰⁷

During the second or transition stage, the ritual subject is kept outside the normal everyday society, in a suspended 'betwixt and between' period, and during this 'liminal' period, the person's characteristics are rendered ambiguous, with no identity, affiliations, or attributes of the 'before' or 'after' states. New rules are introduced specific to this

state, especially no contacts with outside individuals. Physical and psychological trials are also imposed on the novice, where new achievements and lessons in submission are realized.¹⁰⁸ Whether anthropomorphic or animal, malevolent or protective, solitary or numerous, spiritual beings come to teach the initiates the substance of their initiation.¹⁰⁹

Finally, in the third or 'after' phase, symbolic acts of inclusion – naming, special insignia, communal meal – welcomes the person into a new status. Once awarded a new identity, the initiate is officially confirmed and reincorporated into a stable social group. In accordance with certain customary norms, it is expected that the transformed individual will apply the knowledge acquired in the sacred world and fulfill his or her obligations in relation to others of the same 'structural' type to which the individual now belongs.¹¹⁰ Having been nourished and consumed by the rite, the magic circle is broken and can never be wholly closed, for once the ritual enacted, the individual cannot return to the previous stage. However, the individual now has a permanent right to participate in the mystery rites.¹¹¹

II. Turner:

In a number of studies, Victor Turner (1920-1983) focused on the middle stage of the ritual, which is a period of *liminality* that is 'betwixt and between' the social structure that comes before and the one reaffirmed at the end. In concentrating on this section of the rites, Turner interpreted a variety of symbols expressing ambiguity and paradox that eludes the cultural classifications arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonies. The attributes of the liminal *personae* or initiates are "... frequently likened to death, to

being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.”¹¹² It is an experience in humility where the neophyte’s behaviour is pacified, humbled, and ground down to the level of clay through various trials and ordeals. This womb-like uniform condition is equated with the tomb in many cultures because both are associated with the earth that gives life and receives death. Thus, neophytes are treated as neither dead nor alive, and yet they are simultaneously both, which perhaps accounts for them being requested to remain silent.¹¹³

For the duration of this secluded stage, there is nothing to structurally differentiate a liminal person from his/her fellow neophytes, for any distinction is replaced by its binary opposite; like inequality/equality, identity/anonymity, status or distinction of rank/absence of status or rank, distinction of clothing/nakedness or uniform clothing, maximization of sex distinctions/minimization of sex distinctions, and so on. These countless cultural details are taken away from the initiates to assure their anonymous state. Devoid of these defining characteristics, the initiates must obey their instructors in order to be refashioned with the tribe’s knowledge and wisdom. They accept arbitrary punishment without complaint to learn how to become receptive to things they dislike, to those they oppress, to the earth, to themselves, to whatever or whoever animates the universe in order to cope with their new responsibilities, so that they will not abuse their new structural privileges. They are submitted to the authority of the entire community, which cultivates an intense experience of the socio-cultural values, norms, attitudes, sentiments, and relationships that forges lifelong ties between the initiates. Finally, they are offered universal human values like health of body and mind, fertility, universal

justice, equality before the divine, and peace and harmony between all humans regardless of age, sex, race, and ethnic groups.¹¹⁴

During these trials, the initiates may be disguised as monsters by sporting pigments, wearing only a strip of clothing, or even go naked, which is both a symbol of, and an instrument to attain, *communitas*¹¹⁵, which is loosely the opposite of the structured community.¹¹⁶ The use of masks by the ritual leaders represents the parental aspects of the role performed in rituals. Turner speculated that the aggressive character of the 'parents' provoke a strong effect on the initiate, and desiring to possess this animalistic authoritarian parental power, the neophyte imitates these animalistic attributes.¹¹⁷ As seen with van Gennep, the end of the rite marks the rebirth of the initiates, who are now endowed with new positions in the social hierarchy accompanied by greater privileges and obligations. They are given names, titles, and additional powers, for which they are expected to assume appropriate behaviour and uphold the social structure impressed upon them and of which they are now integral parts.¹¹⁸

III. Eliade:

While the Myth & Ritual School proposed that a single evolutionary historical pattern became the basis of all rituals, myths, and other cultural developments, the phenomenologists tried to identify a more complex set of ahistorical universal patterns manifesting themselves in multiple forms. For them, the 'sacred' is not a stage of human consciousness or a divine reality, but a structural element of consciousness. The most famous spokesperson for the phenomenologist school is Mircea Eliade (1907-1986). He

rejected the idea that myth is a misguided explanation and viewed it as a primal form of reasoning that should be analyzed for what it may reveal about human cognition and perception. He moved myths and symbols to the foreground, ahead of ritual, because they provide a clearer view.¹¹⁹ He further argued that myths and symbols refer to the actions of gods, heroes, or ancestors, when they manifested their powers at the beginning of Time, and made a reality – the Cosmos, an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behaviour – come into existence, causing things to become the way they are. Being closer to the underlying structures they reveal the various forms of sacred and religious experiences and expressions of awe accompanying an encounter with the sacred. He added to this Myth & Ritual etiological formulation by arguing that the myth, as revealed by these divine beings alongside initiatory rites when humanity was created and civilized, became the model for all major human activities. Myth, then, established a link between the acts performed during the sacred primordial period by these superhuman beings and the ritual performed in the historical now by humans. Hence, for the primal humans, the birth of a new life imitates this established divine model of the birth of a new world, because they always think of beginnings in cosmological terms.¹²⁰

Archaic cultures justified initiatory death in this same manner, using an origin myth that cited the death of the founder of the mystery, i.e. a divine being. In repeating the primal drama, the initiate also mimics that god's fate. Death is sanctified and charged with religious values through this ritual, becoming critical to the existence of the divinity. To share in the mystical condition of the founder of the mystery, the initiate must ritually die. Thus, initiation and death become interchangeable in order to make the move toward a higher status.¹²¹ This identification between human and divine acts enables people to

revive the cyclical notions of time, and, as Frazer would say, to renew the prosperity and fecundity of the group. Yet, when Eliade looked at Frazer's study of agricultural rites, he emphasized different points. For Eliade, the meaning of sacrifices and the association of sexuality with fertility was not a desire to seasonally regenerate the forces of the sacred, but a belief that these acts were repeating the mythical activities that created the cosmos. So, the difference between Frazer and Eliade is that one sees 'renewal' where the other sees 'repetition'. By reciting the creation myth, the sacrificial animal becomes the body of the primeval being that gave his life to the grain, reminding us of Freud and his Primal Father theory. Nonetheless, Eliade, like Frazer, focused on the theme of death and rebirth as a degenerative chaos and a regenerative order.¹²²

Van Gennep's application of the three-stage ritual pattern to the universal cycle, such as rites demarcating monthly, seasonal, and yearly changes like those of the full and new moons, the solstices and equinoxes, and the New Year's festivities, influenced Eliade's treatment of New Year rituals and cosmic regeneration.¹²³ So Eliade defined the two categories of rites performed in the New Year festival as follows: "(1) those that signify the return to Chaos (e.g., extinguishing fires, expelling 'evil' and sins, reversal of habitual behaviour, orgies, return of the dead); (2) those that symbolize the cosmogony (e.g., lighting new fires, departure of the dead, repetition of the acts by which the gods created the world, solemn prediction of the weather for the ensuing year)."¹²⁴ Hence, during every initiation scenario, whether calendrical or life cycle, in order to become worthy of the sacred teaching and be created anew, the novice must first be prepared spiritually, as the old world must first regress to the profane condition of Chaos, which symbolically corresponds to 'death'.¹²⁵ Further, the concept of gestation and childbirth is

found in numerous initiatory myths and rites, expressed by a series of images representing the beyond as the womb of the Great Earth Mother, the belly of a gigantic sea monster, of a wild beast, or even of a domestic animal. Let us note that these images originally emphasized more than the Other World as the Earth Mother's womb and the world of death. It is also a dangerous transcendent state which the hero, a living being of flesh and blood, enters and descends into with extreme difficulty and without reverting to an embryonic state; so would many Ancient Near-Eastern and Mediterranean myths lead us to believe. In all myths where a 'descent' is reported, there is an encounter with the chthonian Great Mother in her death-goddess and 'mistress of the dead' aspect, showing her threatening and aggressive side. These myths would appear to have an initiatory structure as Freud, Jung, and most particularly Frazer proposed. However, Eliade added that the 'other world' is also a place of knowledge and wisdom, where the Lord of Hell is omniscient, for the dead know the future. In the ritual, his role is played by the old masters of the tribe, the spiritual elites of archaic societies. It is they who know and reveal the transcendental world of spirit, the truly human world.¹²⁶

The central moment of the majority of initiatory ordeals must be understood in relation to what it prepares. In order to become truly human, it is necessary to cease to be a natural being and resemble a mythical model by incarnating one of those divine beings. Thus, the most important consequence of the indispensable symbolic death of the novice is the religious values gained by the conquest of the fear of real death and the belief in the possibility that the human being can survive as a purely spiritual being. From this religious experience, the novice emerges a victorious hero with superhuman attributes, such as omniscience and immortality. He is symbolically resurrected into a new

beginning of spiritual life or a higher mode of being, which is the product of a crucial revelation of the world and life. It must be remembered that the mystical process by which the novices pass to another mode of existence implies that they have become inaccessible to those who have not tasted the initiatory death.¹²⁷

Having argued that mythology is a record of creation and relates the socio-cultural concepts of institution for human activities, Eliade also saw that the ritual depends on myth, because the story narrates the 'sacred history' and assures the right way to perform and repeat the events it imitates. The success of any creation is never better assured than to return to the beginning and reactivate the sacred forces by copying the greatest creation of all. Thus, for all things to be ritually restored to the same state, as when its foundations were laid, it must be done as it was done when the gods did it *for the first time*. By performing the rites, the neophytes and the entire society live in the sacred primordial Time again and participate in the presence of the gods to emerge renewed.¹²⁸ Hence, one of the functions of initiation, in primal archaic societies, was to reveal, to succeeding generations, these carefully preserved sacred mythic traditions: the spiritual world, the deep meaning of existence, the names of the gods, the sacred history of their works, and the mystical relations between the tribe and the great beings as established at the beginning of Time. This was done in order to help the novice be open to spirit life, to learn behaviour patterns, cultural values, techniques, and the institutions of the human community leading to the assuming of responsibilities and participation in the culture into which they were born.¹²⁹ According to this view, 'living' myth is inseparable from ritual, but once they are separated, myth becomes literature or art.¹³⁰

IV. Note on Women's Ritual.

The ritual history has primarily been studied as a male-centred religious tradition, leaving many women somewhat outside both the tradition and the formal scholarship. In recent years, however, scholars, mostly feminists, are closely working on materials linked to women's experience by critically exploring gender roles.¹³¹ Bruce Lincoln studied female initiation rites. In his analysis, he pointed to flaws in van Gennep's ritual model. He argued that a different set of symbols should be used when studying women's initiations, since a girl is not usually separated from her village and family.¹³² Thus, against van Gennep's model and Propp's 'girl tragedy' sequence, Lincoln specified that, though a woman is ritually isolated, she is usually kept within her family. So he replaced the separation-transition-reincorporation with the enclosure-metamorphosis-emergence sequence. He also noticed that most female initiations seem to rely on a moulding logic that transforms an immature girl into a cultured woman. The various activities used in this altering process tend to evoke a cocoon-like change of a caterpillar into a butterfly, rather than the masculine motion of passing through dangerous and purifying ordeals to return as a warrior.¹³³ This reading generated different models for the function and analysis of ritual. The examples of a different set of symbolic logic and imagery for women's initiation rites, is an important contribution by Lincoln to the theory of a universal ritual structure. It presents a subtle, yet valuable detail in the study of ritual.¹³⁴

In general, female initiation focuses on such themes as women bonding, shared communication, and individual empowerment. Feminist rites reclaim areas where women tend to have been cast as polluted or 'cursed' by some cultures and they re-examine the

revelation of the 'mystery of blood' that is natural to the female sex. With the first menses and its matters – periodic purification, fecundity, curative and magical powers – these rites were reinterpreted as a positive self-image connecting women to nature and to other women. This phenomenon is repeated and elaborated until the first pregnancy and concludes with the first childbirth. The ability to create life constitutes a uniquely female experience, which is often perceived as religious. Some feminists go as far as using female language and images to rewrite male-centred ceremonies to create women rites.¹³⁵

For Lincoln, as with Eliade, the important element in female initiatory rites is segregation. While a girl generally learns about the sanctity of life during the seclusion period, the event is essentially a religious experience consisting of a revelation of the child-bearing mystery, of the sacrality of women, and of universal fecundity. Basically, the novice becomes conscious of this natural transformation and is ritually prepared to assume a mode of being exceeding a proper adult woman so as to become a creatrix. The girl learns ritual songs and dances and certain feminine skills, specifically spinning and weaving. These crafts are highly significant symbols which explain the world. In some cultures, just as the moon 'spins' time, the goddesses of destiny 'weave' human lives.¹³⁶ There is an occult connection between weaving and the creations of the world, just as there is a mystical bond linking female initiations, spinning, and sexuality. Dietary restrictions are also part of the rite, and the girl novices wear a special costume in certain cultures. Yet, female cults, among many cultures, have for purpose to teach a woman religious duty in society and her role in the cosmic sacrality. Once the mystery has ended, there is often a solemn exhibition of the girl to the entire community through a ceremonial declaration that acclaims the sacred miraculous presence of a hierophany.¹³⁷

2. Ritual:

A. The Sacred Marriage Rite:

The term *hieros gamos* is Greek, *ἱερός γάμος*, meaning ‘sacred marriage’, ‘sacred wedding feast’, or even ‘sacred intercourse’. It originally referred to Zeus and Hera’s marriage.¹³⁸ In the Mesopotamian context, it is a technical term referring to a mythical or ritual marriage enacted between two deities, more generally a human and a deity, and most specially a king and a goddess.¹³⁹ A divine marriage, or a worshiper’s union with the deity, is similarly described in other cultures.¹⁴⁰ Frazer, in his study *The Golden Bough*, used the term in reference to the symbolic marriage of trees, cultic sexual fertility rites, and the marriages of deities around the world.¹⁴¹ Bottero suggested that the Akkadian equivalent to *hieros gamos* might be *hashadu* and *hadashshutu*, derived from *hadashu*, meaning ‘to rejoice’.¹⁴² Nissinen argued that the word *q/gursh/su* derives from the verb *garash/su*, and should be translated ‘copulate, to make love, or love ritual/intercourse’. For example, in the Neo-Assyrian period, the goddess of the city of Ashur, Mullissu, had her *qurshu*, ‘love ritual’, during the month Shabatu, as mentioned in ritual calendars and in the inventory lists of the Esharra, the god Ashur’s temple.¹⁴³ According to one of these Assyrian texts, the ritual cycle required 11 days to be performed.¹⁴⁴

I. History of the *Hieros Gamos*.

The sacred marriage rite seems ancient and may date back to prehistoric Sumerian times. Some scholars argued that carvings of copulating couples ^{Fg 1}, found in ancient Mesopotamian Neolithic sites (9000 to 5000 BCE), attest to the long tradition of ritual intercourse.¹⁴⁵ The tradition of this important event seems to have originated in the Inanna cult and would probably have been passed down orally by the Inanna cult personnel involved in its secrets and realization, though over time the sacred marriage took place between various deities of cities, such as Nanna and Ninlil, Marduk and his wife, etc.¹⁴⁶ From the historical evidence, we can chronologically divide celebration of the ritual into periods. By the end of the 4th or beginning of the 3rd millennium, in the Jemdet Nasr period, it is highly likely that both the high-priestess and high-priest involved in the *hieros gamos* both used the title of *en*. The institution of *en*-ship and the temple preceded the political office of the king. Over time, however, the sacred marriage became linked with royal ideology, and by the Old Sumerian (Early Dynastic) period (3000-2500 BCE), the designation *lugal*, 'king' (lit. 'big-man'), first occurred at the city of Kish (c. 2700 BCE). Meador argued that, at this time, it is likely that a council of elders chose the king, who was probably not a powerful man who drew together the city populations, but possibly only a city functionary.¹⁴⁷ The evidence explains how integral to their kingship and important it was for the early kings of Uruk to perform the marriage ritual with Inanna/Ishtar; a Mesopotamian tradition that was older than the Ur III period.¹⁴⁸ Klein, looking at the Sumerian Epic tradition (written much later than events in the epics), proposed that the literary compositions of the most important, joyous, and

rapturous prolonged New Year festival in Uruk, culminating in the royal sacred marriage ritual, probably originated in the 1st Dynasty of ancient Uruk (c. 2700 BCE), where a priestess represented Inanna and the king was symbolically identified with Dumuzi.¹⁴⁹

As just mentioned, the first historical evidence for the king's union with Inanna, in songs and poems all over the Ancient Near East, is from early Sumerian epic tales, specifically the text referring to the legendary king Enmerkar, who ruled Uruk two generations before Dumuzi, and his rivalry with Enshuhkeshdanna, ruler of Aratta. The text recounts how both Enmerkar and Enshuhkeshdanna believed that they should be recognized as the 'true bridegroom' of the goddess Inanna. There is a contest between their magical envoys and eventually his opponent declares Enmerkar superior.¹⁵⁰ But throughout the centuries it was not Enmerkar or Enshuhkeshdanna's name that was fated to become linked with Inanna and the *hieros gamos*; it was that of Dumuzi, known as Tammuz in the Hebrew Bible (Ez 8:14).¹⁵¹ Students of Sumerian religion, basing their view on the *Sumerian King List*, generally accept that the Dumuzi mentioned in these hymns ruled in Uruk between Lugalbanda and Gilgamesh, though it is possible that he was the antediluvian king of the same name.¹⁵² We may assume that he might have been one of the most memorable rulers of Uruk, though unlike his predecessors or his far-famed successor Gilgamesh, there are no heroic epic tales attached to Dumuzi. Rather, it was his sacred marriage with Inanna that became his legacy, against which all following sacred marriage hymns and rituals were patterned. One tradition records that Dumuzi was not even a native of Uruk. Rather, it is said that he was from the city of Kua, in the neighbourhood of Eridu (one of southern Sumer's most hallowed cities).¹⁵³ Yet, according to the Sumerian poems, the goddess Inanna of Uruk, in accordance with her

parents' wishes, picked him especially for 'the godship of the land' and married him. Through this wedding, Dumuzi became one of the early kings of Uruk, was deified, and entered the Sumerian pantheon as a fertility-god.¹⁵⁴

Though we have no way of knowing for certain when this transcendental credo and mystic rite began to be a necessary part of the kingship ritual, it is not unreasonable to surmise that it started from the reigns of Eannatum (c. 2455-2425 BCE), Ur-Nammu (c. 2112-2095 BCE) and his son Shulgi of Ur (c. 2094-2047 BCE), Shu-Sin who ruled over the land of Sumer (c. 2030 BCE), and Iddin-Dagan of Isin (c. 1950 BCE). These kings of Sumer, along with many others, claimed the title 'beloved spouse of Inanna' by becoming Dumuzi incarnate.¹⁵⁵ The numerous royal sacred marriage texts, like the hymnal myth *Plow My Vulva* and the Nippur ritual of the king's crowning by Inanna, mainly date from this Sumerian Early Dynastic II-III period (2500-2000 BCE).¹⁵⁶ Since a number of the Neo-Sumerian kings viewed themselves as gods, an idea which probably depended on their connection with the goddess through the sacred marriage, the ritual peaked in that period, and naturally we find most of the Dumuzi-Inanna love songs during this period.¹⁵⁷ The evermore nationally minded Sumerians began a tradition that caused their flourishing schools to produce mythographers and poets, who were to compose sacred marriage literary works that endured for centuries and influenced many subsequent Akkadian and Babylonian authors. This custom continued through to the Old Akkadian (Sargonic), Lagash II, and Neo-Sumerian (Ur III Dynasty Isin-Larsa) periods, down to the end of the cuneiform tradition. And the ritual was performed down through the 1st millennium BCE, as attested in non-literary material, such as offering texts, royal inscriptions, economic texts, and other descriptions.¹⁵⁸ Inscriptions from the city of

Lagash, some found on statues of king Gudea of Lagash (2141-2122 BCE), record the bridal gifts, brought by both the god Ningirsu and the king, for the goddess Baba, indicating that the sacred marriage rite was also performed there and involved deities other than Inanna and Dumuzi.¹⁵⁹

In the Early Old Babylonian period and Kassite Dynasty (2000-1500 BCE), the same imagery used in Sumerian sacred marriage tradition seems to have continued through the 1st Babylonian Dynasty. The *irtu*-song, mentioning the Babylonian king Ammi-ditana (1683-1647 BCE), shows definite borrowing from the Sumerian love songs, and so did the Middle Babylonian love song *Erbamma re'u*, which belongs to a series called *zamaru*-songs, which were religious ritual songs, like hymns. Further, the kings of Isin and Larsa also claimed a special spousal relationship with Inanna/Ishtar and her hypostasis, Nanaya. However, Hammurabi's coming (1792-1750 BCE), followed by his Dynasty, brought the dawn of a new sensibility that marked an ending to this phenomenon. During this period, all of the divine attributes started to disappear from the kingship. The new Amorite Dynasty no longer favoured the complex idea of divine kingship and titles, the writing of hymns, and even offerings, for they derived their ancestry from Amorite patriarchs rather than gods.¹⁶⁰ All the other goddesses, except for Ishtar the war-goddess, were starting to lose royal support during the Babylonian period (c. 1600 BCE), because the Amorite warrior-kings associated with the conquering god; thus the goddesses receded into the domestic sphere and became more part of the popular religion. Inanna/Ishtar seems to have been the only goddess who escaped and did not disappear, but became even more important. There are a few reasons for this, one being that she was a male-like war-goddess, another because she was the goddess who

chose/made the king through the sacred marriage since time immemorial.¹⁶¹ However, based on the evidence, the later 2nd millennium Kassite and Middle Assyrian love songs show that the divine love rituals continued to exist much longer and involved many other divine couples aside from Inanna/Ishtar and Dumuzi.¹⁶²

So the royal sacred marriage continued to be performed after the establishment of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires during the Old Babylonian period. At this time, the sacred marriage became incorporated into the Akkadian *akitu* festival, derived from the Sumerian *akiti* agricultural holiday. A royal union ritual between Marduk and Sarpanitum/Zarpanitu, or even Ishtar, was performed on the 11th day, following the ritual re-enactment of the events recounted in the *Enuma Elish* (the Babylonian creation hymn), which was recited for the occasion on the 4th day. However, emphasis was put on the kings' ritual re-enactment of Marduk's military and kingly roles, which celebrated stability, order, and monarchy rather than fertility, union, and renewal.¹⁶³ While not always celebrated with Inanna and Dumuzi, and dramatically altered, the love songs did not entirely disappear from 2nd millennium Mesopotamia. The ideals of the Sumerian union between the goddess and the Mesopotamian king still continued during the Middle Assyrian period and II Dynasty of Isin (1500-1000 BCE). The king was still identified with the god, so that he was still the goddess' lover.¹⁶⁴ For example, in an Ishtar and Dumuzi love poem, one of the Middle Assyrian rulers, king Shalmaneser I (1273-1244 BCE), is mentioned and identified with Dumuzi.¹⁶⁵

The offerings for several different ceremonies, performed during the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods (1000-500 BCE), are described on a ritual tablet from Uruk. It includes the marriage ceremony (*parse hashadu*) of Anu and Antu, which

occurred in the month of Tashritu during the *akitu* festival. Some of the *hieros gamos* tablets, dating to the time of the Chaldean king, Nabopolassar (625-605 BCE), were copied down into the Seleucid period (320-141 BCE).¹⁶⁶ A text, dating from the time of the Persian king Cambyses (592-522 BCE), son of Cyrus the Great, mentions the Lady of Sippar and explains how sesame oil was provided for the goddess' marriage performed in the month of Shabatu. The temple personnel used linen for the protection of the Lady's sacred bed in the Ebabbar temple, confirming that the sacred marriage bed was still in use at the time of Darius I (521-486 BCE).¹⁶⁷ Even at Jerusalem, the women were still weeping for Tammuz (Dumuzi) in the time of Ezekiel (c. 600 BCE), showing the impact and longevity of this cult, which, by this time, was as much a matter for private worship as it was public.¹⁶⁸ The Hebrew writers also generously borrowed rhythms, themes, and imageries from these hymns to compose the *Song of Songs*.¹⁶⁹ According to the *Esagil* tablet, copied from the original *Borsippa* tablet in the time of Seleucus II (246-226 BCE), the deities' sacred marriage, in the Seleucid and Parthian periods (500-0 BCE), seems to have continued the Babylonian tradition of being celebrated on the 11th day of the month of Nisannu (March-April), during the *akitu* festival. In the Etemenanki ziggurat of Babylon there was even a ceremonial bed in the bedchamber of the temple for the marriage of Marduk and Zarpanitu.¹⁷⁰

Kramer argued that the credos of the sacred marriage rite – to make people happy, prosperous, and teeming in multitude – were simple, attractive, and highly persuasive. It was the innovating and imaginative product of the methodical Sumerian thinkers, priests, and poets of the early 3rd millennium BCE. These individuals first conceived and developed this idea from their cultures' needs and drives, giving them an enduring and

essential institutional form through their religious faith and ritual practice.¹⁷¹ However, Kramer made it sound as if the idea was a patriarchal creation that began in a city, while the ritual itself has more to do with the country. It seems, rather, as mentioned above, that the kingship validation was an attribute later adapted to the sacred marriage rite in order to be assimilated and controlled by the elites, but the core and purpose of the ritual was born from popular local rituals.

Lapinkivi listed close to 60 song cycles and myths¹⁷² recounting the courtship, love, and sacred wedding of Inanna/Ishtar and Dumuzi celebrated in Uruk. Sefati treats 27 of these hymns in detail in his research, and, at that time, the material encompassed 38 songs. Kramer, who was the first Sumerologist to devote his study to these sacred texts, presented 25 songs. It is not surprising that these deities are more closely associated with the ritual than any other gods.¹⁷³ However, according to the evidence, the concept of ‘sacred marriage’ was not limited to Sumer, nor to Inanna and Dumuzi. In later periods, similar love poetry appeared elsewhere in Mesopotamia, involving other divine couples, such as Baba and Ningirsu, Shamash and Aya, and Anu and Antu, or the city’s particular deity and his/her spouse, and they all had a sacred marriage ceremony celebrated in the temples. While the Nabu and Tashmetu or Nisaba/Nanaya ritual was performed at Borsippa, in Babylon, the nuptial of the god and goddess was between Marduk and Zarpanitu.¹⁷⁴ Since Mesopotamia interacted with many cultures, they were all once parts of its cultural sphere, and it is possible that the sacred marriage concept directly influenced these traditions. Time wise, extra-Sumerian written sources and traditions cover a time span of almost five thousand years. Geographically, the evidence attests to the sacred marriage ritual’s influence throughout the entire ancient Near East – Akkadian,

Egyptian, Ugaritic, and biblical sources – reaching as far as India and even leaving an impression on the Greco-Roman mystery religions and philosophies.¹⁷⁵ Thus, there were also Osiris and Isis in Egypt, Shiva and Parvati in India, Attis and Cybele in Asia Minor, Zeus and Hera in Greece, and so forth.¹⁷⁶ In fact, a form of the sacred marriage is still performed annually today at Madurai, India.¹⁷⁷ Unfortunately, when studying the Sumerian sacred marriage, though extremely relevant, the available comparative evidence has rarely been seriously discussed and has been almost completely ignored.¹⁷⁸

II. What the Ritual Entailed.

The information we have on what actually took place during the sacred marriage ceremony of Inanna and Dumuzi is vague and contradictory and does not entirely describe the ritual, though it may be painstakingly reconstructed in detail based on the numerous ancient Sumerian hymns.¹⁷⁹ Our earliest evidence comes from the descriptive language of the *Shulgi Hymn X* text. King Shulgi of Ur (2094-2047 BCE) is said to have brought, by boat, gifts for the Eanna, the goddess' temple in Uruk, biblical Erech, where all the Sumerian and Akkadian *me*¹⁸⁰, including the *me* of kingship and princeship, were kept. There, in Inanna's city, kings and princes were made. Shulgi docked his boat at the quay of Kullab, an ancient and venerated district of Uruk.¹⁸¹ The king unloaded his sacrificial animals and gifts, which were almost exclusively food, both for the bride-wealth and regular offerings, and proceeded to Inanna's shrine, the Eanna.¹⁸² Offerings were only partly made to the deity while the rest, especially the meat, was consumed by the people (the cultic personnel received a portion of this food while the rest returned to

the offerer).¹⁸³ Meanwhile, Inanna bathed, adorned her sides, coated her lips with amber, and painted her eyes with kohl, all for the king, the shepherd Dumuzi. Once in Uruk, Shulgi put on ritual *me*-garments and a special crown-like wig (*hi-li*), and came before Inanna. She was so struck by his glory that she broke into a passionate song that recounts what will take place in the sacred marriage. At the ritual's core was the sexual act between the king and goddess-figure. So the text relates how, once on the bed, the king laid his hands on Inanna's pure vulva and caressed the goddess. It even graphically describes how the king, now impersonating the shepherd Dumuzi, smoothed Inanna's lap 'with milk and cream'. Clearly, the king was having intercourse with the goddess' human representative. Finally, at the end, she decrees her precious blessing.¹⁸⁴

The *Iddin-Dagan Hymn* is the most elaborate sacred marriage song we have found to date, though it differs in almost every important detail from the Shulgi account. It is a long poem to Inanna by Iddin-Dagan, the 3rd king of the Isin Dynasty (c. 1900 BCE). It graphically depicts the sexual encounter between the king and goddess. The king describes the goddess' benevolent role as evening star, and her monthly festival as the moon.¹⁸⁵ The New Year festival poem culminates with a ceremonial description of a throne dais being set up by the king, on New Year's Eve, for Inanna, the 'Queen of the Palace'. There follows the setting up, in the palace, of the fruitful marriage bed, strewn with grasses, rushes, and cedar, over which was spread a very special coverlet that 'rejoices the heart' and 'makes sweet the bed' in preparation for the ritual.¹⁸⁶ Inanna, as the bride, readied herself by washing, anointing, adorning, and dressing herself in special 'garments of power', before entering the *é-ki-nà*, the ritual 'house of the bed'. Music and the singing of love songs accompanied the procession festivities, at which point

Ninshubur, Inanna's divine vizier, brought the king to the prayer- and song-filled house and shrine, where the holy bed was ^{Fig 2}. He, as Dumuzi, 'with lifted head', proudly walked on a floor fragrant with cedar oil and approached Inanna's pure 'holy lap' on the great fertile bed, where the partners finally meet. The king embraced the priestess and lay down to consummate the marriage with the queen-goddess in sexual bliss.¹⁸⁷ Then, the king is referred to as the god Ama-ushumgal-ana¹⁸⁸, another name for Dumuzi. There, in her bed, Inanna gazed at the king with her shining countenance, caressed him, and they made love with intent to promote the fertility of the land. After their sexual union, she declared Iddin-Dagan as her true beloved and invoked blessings on the king.¹⁸⁹ The next day, New Year's Day, there followed 'the holy sacrifices, for the well-established rites'. After, the king led his lovely wife, the 'holy Inanna' (i.e., her priestess), 'like the light of day to the throne on the great dais', and he 'installed [?] himself at her side like the king Utu [the sun-god]'. In the palace's large reception hall, a great wedding banquet, rich in food and drinks, was prepared. The 'whole palace was festive', with a choir of devotees and musicians, *kurgarru*, who attended the ceremony. They knelt down in chants and prayers, and served the meal in celebration of the sacred marriage's consummation. Meanwhile, in the streets around the temple of Eturkalamma, the people partook in rituals and 'paraded' before the divine couple to honour them.¹⁹⁰

In the *Plow my Vulva* hymn, Inanna sings a song praising her vulva, comparing it to the horn of a new crescent moon, 'the boat of heaven', and to a fallow land, a high field, and a hillock. After which she exclaims "... who will plow ... my vulva, the watered ground – for me, ... the queen...?" To which, of course, the king, Dumuzi, answers, to her delight, that he will plow it for her. At that point, Inanna calls Dumuzi,

pronounces blessings upon him, and exalts him to godship over the land. Then she prepares herself by ritually washing and adorning her body. After a break in the text, the festival continues with Dumuzi lying by Inanna's side, to consummate the marriage, 'in the house of life, the house of the king', which causes luxuriant vegetation – plants, grains, gardens – to flourish all about them, while a rising cedar stands at the king's lap. Meanwhile, the *gala*-singers¹⁹¹ chanted. Finally, Inanna utters a plea for cream, milk, and cheese from her shepherd husband.¹⁹²

According to these songs, Inanna and her consort Dumuzi are the prototypical couple, and their courtship and marriage describe the sacred marriage ritual celebrated in Uruk. Through these hymns, we begin to get a sense of this ritual's importance and significance for the Sumerian ideas about the interaction between humans and deities. The king, as the god, began on a journey towards the goddess' holy shrine where the sacred marriage was consummated.¹⁹³ In another fragmentary text, entitled *Your breast is your field*, an altar is prepared in the Eanna temple by the linen-wearing priests, who also brought water and bread for Dumuzi. With a chant, they asked Dumuzi to approach Inanna. As the king walked to the priestess, he compared Inanna's breasts to a fertile field, and asked to drink from them.¹⁹⁴ Nissen believed that this procession was described on the Warka vase, a large vase dating to the pre-Sargonic 4th millennium BCE Uruk ^{Fg 3}. He argued that the sculpted relief, depicting a sequence of naked priests, carrying baskets full of produce, are following a man in royal robes approaching the priestess, as the goddess Inanna, who stands at the *gipar*'s¹⁹⁵ door. Rows of barley, palms, rams, and ewes, all tributes for the goddess, are illustrated below these gift bearers. The vase's iconography seems to illustrate the sacred marriage texts, and thus

the ritual's performance in Uruk.¹⁹⁶ From the textual evidence, we also see a recurring motif. The bathing, anointing, and adorning ritual always seem to precede the couple's sexual union. Since this theme recurs in several of the Dumuzi-Inanna songs, it must have played an important part in the sacred marriage ceremony.¹⁹⁷ Then follows the crucial description of the couple's union, where the king is usually mentioned as going to Inanna's bosom 'with head held high', and embracing her.¹⁹⁸ Finally, as Sefati noted, the sacred marriage rite was used to secure the goddess' important blessings and glorious fate for the attractive lover and successful classical hero. The king needed this decree of a good fate, present in most songs, for himself and his country, which legitimated his claim to power. These blessings included abundance, fertility, and the preserving of Dumuzi's 'storehouse', his 'holy stall', where the fate of all the lands, people, and all living things was decreed, thus successfully bringing together the natural and social order.¹⁹⁹

III. Who Incarnated the Goddess?

a. Priestess.

Between the fancy and fact described by the poets, as to what actually took place during the ritual, there are many important unanswered questions surrounding the study of the sacred marriage. We do know, as Frayne identified from the early Sumerian material, that the king, as is the case with king Ishme-Dagan, by assuming the typical role of the *en* priest, became clearly interchangeable with the god Dumuzi, was able to perform in the sacred marriage ceremony, and made love to the goddess.²⁰⁰ By contrast,

in the late periods, as Frymer-Kensky argued, the sacred marriage was a state occasion, and basically a royal ritual. So it became important for the royal ideology, and the whole society, that the king played the male role in this sacred marriage, because it was now his function to represent both the earthly king and the god. The love poems clearly identify the divine 'male lover' of the goddess by the word 'king' or even by the king's first name. In this case, one wonders why the identity or office of the woman, incarnating the goddess, was still kept hidden.²⁰¹ On the other hand, the texts may not have mentioned the identity of the human female partner, because she was not the important player. But this does not exactly reveal the true identity of who impersonated the goddess. If we believe the literal wording of the poems, it is always Inanna herself who lay with the king, and it was she who also partook of the banquet the next day. At times, the goddess is referred to by titles, such as *nin-é-gal* ('Queen of the Palace'), *ki-sikil* (maiden), and *nu-gig* (priestess), amongst other epithets. The human identity of the female participant remains obscured.²⁰² The woman's function was thus to become the goddess, and, for all use and purposes, she was the goddess. Without doubt, it must have been a special woman, more than just a regular priestess consecrated to the goddess, who was chosen for this ritual. Her status must have been highly important and much valued. However, since there does not seem to be any information readily available in the love songs as to the identity of the lady who participated in the Mesopotamian *hieros gamos* ritual, the perplexing question, first raised by Kramer, still remains open to debate and speculation, and different scholars have put forth a variety of ideas and theories.²⁰³

Based on the textual use of anthropomorphic imagery, describing the relationship between harvest and storehouse, Jacobsen insisted that human actors sexually enacted

their parts in the sacred marriage rite. According to Hallo, who supported this view, the king was the incarnation of the god and the queen, or a priestess, embodied the goddess. Others, like Kraus, do not dispute the possibility that this old practice was preserved as a literary event, though, by the time of the Isin and Sargonic periods, it may no longer have been carried out in the flesh. Kraus also did not discard the option that the Isin kings may have created the whole tradition to provide meaning for the 'spouse of Inanna' royal epithet. Leick and Steinkeller went further and questioned the textual evidence and argued that the matrimony was a purely symbolic event. They proposed that the temple personnel metaphorically embodied their respective divinities, within a sacred room, by miming the gestures of the ritual without having sexual intercourse.²⁰⁴ However, using Frymer-Kensky's interpretation of the 1st millennium divine marriage texts, in which, she argued, only icons were involved, Leick theorized that the same was also probably true of the older Sumerian texts.²⁰⁵ Steinkeller further proposed that, from its origin, there would not have been a woman with a status high enough to appropriately stand for the goddess. According to this opinion, the male king, on the other hand, would have been worthy to be the god incarnate.²⁰⁶ However, after further consideration, Steinkeller concluded that the symbolic value of the ceremony would have been weakened by human involvement, so that the king would not have personified the god either.²⁰⁷

Still, other scholars, like Frymer-Kensky and Bottero, when studying specifically some 1st millennium texts, considered the possibility that the Sumerian festival, in which texts the sexual intercourse is vividly described, later became replaced by a static ceremony. Basing their argument on their interpretation of such texts as the *Iddin-Dagan A* text, and contrary to the textual evidence, they proposed that the king may have united

with the goddess' statue. The *Iddin-Dagan A* text does use a highly stylized language, fusing descriptive elements with metaphoric and hymnic passages, which may not be a factual observation of the events. Yet, this idealized recounting of the ritual is typical, and the presence of sexual elements, like the ones describing Inanna making love to the king on the pure bed, is intriguing, presenting serious interpretation problems for the above argument. Frayne, on the other hand, attributed this change to the disappearance of the *entu* priestess' installation from the Mesopotamian archival texts and sacred marriage descriptions in Old Babylonian times. Though commemorating the earlier sacred union, the Akkadian rite was therefore no longer an august, glamorous, and revered Sumerian sacred marriage. Rather, divinely infused statues²⁰⁸ – the cultic icons of the divine couple – were dressed, carried out in a procession to a garden, laid on their bed in their chamber, left there together overnight, and, the next day, they were served a sacrificial meal. Throughout the entire *hieros gamos*, the cultic personnel recited or sang hymns, on behalf of the king and the goddess, and successively put the statues in the various tableaux enacting every scene, which conveyed the actual presence of the divine.²⁰⁹ Perhaps this explains why the *qedeshot*²¹⁰ priestesses by Hezekiah's time, were making garments for Asherah. At this period, if there was a Judahite sacred marriage ceremony, it may no longer have been performed by humans, but by statues.²¹¹

Yet, in some love songs, the goddess Inanna is referred to as both a *nu-gig/nu-u-gig* (Akkadian *qadishtulishtaritu*) and a *nu-bar/nu-u-bar*, which brought Sefati and Renger to suggest that the woman personifying Inanna was likely a priestess belonging to one of these classes. And, just as the words 'god' and 'king' (or their names) are transposable in the text, so would it be for the words 'goddess' (or her name) and

‘priestess’.²¹² For example: “Lordly Queen, when you enter the stall; Inanna, the stall rejoices with you; Hierodule [*mu-gig*], when you enter the sheepfold; The stall rejoices with you.”²¹³ Based on the Akkadian translation of the term as *qadishtu*, *nugig* is usually translated as ‘hierodule’²¹⁴. Though often mistranslated as ‘sacred prostitute’, the *nugig* was in fact a female ritual expert who held a high rank in the society.²¹⁵

The Mesopotamian royal household was polygynous. The king’s main wife was the *nin* (meaning both ‘lady/queen’ and ‘sister’), a high priestess²¹⁶, who was, to some extent, interchangeable with the goddess she was qualified to replace. In the Ur III and Isin periods, the king’s other wives were known as *lukur*, always called ‘beloved’, *ki-ag*. *Lukur* priestesses were connected only to male deities, though they could marry and have children.²¹⁷ Kramer accepted the suggestion that the *lukur* were the priestesses that played the female role in the sacred marriage, since they were the ‘king’s priestly wives’ or ‘king’s consorts’.²¹⁸ This theory was mainly derived from the *lukur* priestess Kubatum who wrote a love lyric, *Shu-Sin A*. Shu-Sin was the son of a queen called Abisimti and (or grand son) of Shulgi, and reigned during the Ur III period (c. 2030 BCE). The name Kubatum is one of the few for which we have concrete evidence, from surviving records – though they might not have all been yet recovered – which would identify the female as the king’s wife. Her song was addressed to her husband, Shu-Sin, and it may have been recited during the *hieros gamos* at the Sumerian spring New Year.²¹⁹

Thus some *lukurs* had sexual relations with the king, and, if they produced an heir, they could rise to the high status of royal wife/mother and become a *nin*. All the wives shared the king’s quasi-divine status. Since they possessed sufficient funds, they

could make costly offerings on their own and their king's behalf. By the Old Babylonian period, in Akkadian list, the term *lukur* is equated with *qadishtu* 'sacred/set apart woman', *batultu* 'virgin/maiden/unmarried', and *naditu* 'nun', though by this time, the *naditu* does not fulfill the same role as the *lukur* of earlier times. While Leick suggested that the *lukur* were royal courtesans who had achieved a superior status, which distinguished them from other women of the royal household, Steinkeller proposed that they were the earthly counterparts of the heavenly ones, who Jacobsen said were rain-cloud goddesses.²²⁰ Though it is possible that her queenly status, rather than her *lukur* priestess-hood, qualified her for embodying Inanna, we would expect her identification with the goddess to have been given more emphasis. Yet, the references to Inanna as 'queen' may have been overlooked as evidence of such a connection. However, if the woman had been clearly identified as the queen, then she would not have been the goddess, which would have jeopardized the power of the ritual; after all, it was Dumuzi who died and was resurrected, and, like him, the king could be replaced by another king. Inanna, however, was constant, immortal. Nevertheless, the queen would also have been a priestess, just as the king was a priest, and it was as the *en* of the city that he was allowed to perform the part of Dumuzi in the rituals.²²¹ Alster, on the other hand, believing that the *en*-ship was strictly a male priestly status, suggested that the role of Dumuzi was enacted by an *en* priest, while a *lagar* priestess being one of the most important priestly offices, second to that of *en*, incarnated Inanna.²²²

The Sumerian term *en*, which appears in year formulas, is generally assumed to be masculine. Yet, it does not necessarily refer to a male priest who participated in the sacred marriage ritual with the goddess. As Renger and others have pointed out,

evidence suggests that the term *en*, like most Sumerian words referring to people, can be either masculine or feminine, and is equivalent to the Akkadian *enu* (masculine) or *entu* (feminine), thus making it hard to determine whether it refers to a man or a woman. This is illustrated by the example of Nanna's high-priestess at Ur, in the year formulas and inscriptions, who is simply referred to as *en*, indicating that in most cases this figure was certainly not a male priest. *Entu* priestesses are usually devoted to male deities, although it is not uncommon to find them with goddesses, such as Baba, Gatumdug, Ninisinna, Ninsun and Nisaba, which show that there could have been an *entu* priestess of Inanna.²²³

Woolley discovered a 'low platform' in an important room of the temple of the goddess Ningal, the E-nun, at Ur, and he thought it might have served as a base for a bed. Ningal's bed, encrusted with gold, is also mentioned on a stele of an *en* priestess, Enanedu.²²⁴ A similar richly adorned bed, or 'couch of unusual size', is described by Herodotus as having been located in the topmost tower of the ziggurat of Babylon, where there were no statues of any kind. There, he recorded, a native woman, specially chosen by the deity 'out of all the women of the land', took part in a ritual where the god Marduk came down in person to sleep with the woman upon the couch.²²⁵ Based on Woolley's discovery, Weadock asserted that the supreme purpose of the Ningal temple, at Ur, was for the sacred marriage celebration between Ningal and the moon-god Nanna/Sin, in which Nanna's *en/entu* priestess representing Ningal performed the female role.²²⁶

Frayne proposed that, for the Sumerians, the *hieros gamos* union was between a goddess and a god, and their human counterparts, the 'virgin' *entu* priestess and her husband, the king or *enu* priest, who incarnated the city's divine couple by assuming divine status during the ritual intercourse event installing a priestess.²²⁷ Since some of

the *ens* were equated with the specifically female Sumerian *nin-dingir*, rendered *entu* in Akkadian, it implies that both terms referred to the same person and that there were no differences between them, except on an orthographic level. We also know, from texts, that the *gipar* was where the ritual took place, and both the *nin-dingir* and the *en/entu* priestesses resided there. Year formulas also commemorated their designation and installation, which offers another hint of this woman's identity.²²⁸ The common Sumerian designation of *en* or *nin/nin-dingir*, the latter meaning 'lady deity' or 'lady who is goddess', clearly suggests that she would have been the human participant embodying the goddess in the sacred marriage ritual.²²⁹ This title would also explain why the priestess is simply referred to as Inanna in the love hymn descriptions. Stuckey further suggested that the *nin-dingir/entu* was a talented medium, who, through training, was able to go into an ecstatic state, which allowed the goddess to suppress the priestess' awareness and take over her body. Therefore, the human woman's identity was irrelevant, since the only female present during the ritual was indeed Inanna. The king, to a similar extent, would literally have embodied the god Dumuzi. Naturally, for being able to channel the goddess for the ritual intercourse with the king, this priestess would have been deeply revered. As the goddess' chosen one, she would have been elevated to an extremely high status, meaning that she was certainly not a prostitute, since she had to adhere to strict ethical standards following the Mesopotamian law codes.²³⁰

Similarly, in Egypt, the most important of all the royal women were the king's mother and his principal wife; not surprisingly, there is virtually no distinction between the two titles, for the same woman eventually played both parts in her lifetime. Thus both can be referred to as queens. Clearly, the notion of queenship was complementary

to that of kingship; one position could not exist without the other, for both were rooted in mythology and the divine world. In fact, ritually speaking, since they held a position that extended into the divine from the mortal sphere, the queens' roles were identified as one.²³¹ In royal ideology, the king hoped to renew himself through the female principle of the universe represented by the queen, in which mother and wife were conceptualized as identical.²³² This ideology is analogous to the divine Kamutef myth, in which the sun-god perpetually renewed himself by impregnating the sky-goddess every night and by being born of her again in the morning; thus she was both mother and consort to the god.²³³ In that role, she was often associated with Hathor. Further, the Egyptian queen was also equated with the goddesses of Upper and Lower Egypt, becoming the living goddess of the two lands, only a normal role for the mother and wife of Pharaoh.²³⁴

Though the king rarely performed rituals in the temple, it is possible that, when he did, the queen accompanied him, for she frequently appears following the king in temple scenes and on royal stele. This means that queens had a ritual role. However, they are normally inactive in these scenes, though at times they offer to a deity or shake a sistrum. Depictions of the king's divine birth differ from other temple scenes; some specifically represent the mother's conception of the king through impregnation by the god Amun-Ra. Two complete birth cycles from the 18th Dynasty, and other fragments from later periods, have survived. In them, the god, who took on the form of the queen's royal husband, visits the king's mother, the earthly consort of the god, and she conceives, and later gives birth to the heir to the throne. The queen, without mediation from the king, achieved direct contact with the gods, something that rarely happens elsewhere. This may have been one of the reasons for the queen-mother's importance.²³⁵

The priestly title of 'divine adoratrice' (*duat netjer*), which was first held by the high-priest of Amun's daughter during Hatshepsut's reign (1503-1482 BCE), occurs at times in the 18th Dynasty (1567-1320 BCE). During Ahmoses' reign (1570-1546 BCE), it became part of the royal women's titularies, and was later associated and synonymous with the non-royal priestly office of 'god's wife of Amun' and 'god's hand' during the Third Intermediate Period (1089-525 BCE), where the same woman bore all these titles.²³⁶ However, the title and role of 'god's wife of Amun' was to be inherited from mother to daughter.²³⁷ The title of 'god's hand', and its equivalent 'god's wife', refers to the hand that the creator-god Atum used to masturbate the first divine pair, Shu and Tefnut, into existence. Because the Egyptian word for 'hand' is grammatically feminine, it was easy to personify it as a goddess, and, by the 18th Dynasty, this deity was often identified as Hathor.²³⁸ This priestess evidently had an active role in the temple ritual, for she entered the sanctuary of the god like the male priests. The woman who held this office was a human married to the god Amun, incarnating the deity's consort in various temple rituals. The titles certainly have a sexual connotation, though the cultic implications are not fully understood. Perhaps, through conjecture, we can deduce that the priestess' function was to ritually stimulate the god sexually, so that he would prevent the world from falling back into chaos by continually re-enacting the creation of the universe.²³⁹ Regardless, there is no doubt that many 'god's wives', like Ahmoses Neferari and Hatshepsut, were married and bore children, which initiated the 18th Dynasty's popular concept that the crown-prince was the offspring of a union between Amun and the Great Royal Wife of the reigning king, though it may have been irrelevant to their function in temple ceremonies.²⁴⁰

Many commentators, including Andreasen, see the institutionalized role of the Hittite *tawananna* queen-mother as a parallel to the Hebrew *gevurah* queen-mother and corresponding to the Sumerian *ama-dingir*, ‘mother of the god’. It comes to no surprise that the queen-mother held the same position as the mother of the gods in sacral royal ideology, suggesting that her position was based in religion. In fact, the *tawananna* also held the position of *shiwanzanni*-priestess²⁴¹, which gave her much power in the cultic sphere where she performed rituals. The *tawananna*, being a lawful queen and the mother of the heir-apparent, assumed a significant amount of responsibilities within the social, political, and economic affairs of the king’s court. She was often involved in political affairs both within the kingdom and with foreign nations. Moreover, being fairly independent, she played an important part in the policy and religion of the Hittite culture.²⁴² In her study on the *tawananna*, Bin-Nun argued that, in the early Hittite Old Kingdom period, the title exclusively referred to a religious functionary, being the sun-goddess Arinna’s high-priestess.²⁴³ Her position was for life, retaining it during her son’s reign, if she survived the king; and her title passed to her daughter-in-law, the wife of the reigning king, only on her death. However, in exceptional cases, she could be dismissed for a serious offence against the king or the state.²⁴⁴ Though there obviously was no direct borrowing, given the time gap between the fall of the Hittite empire and the rise of the Israelite monarchy, Donner emphasized that the Hittite political structures survived to the 1st millennium by influencing Syria, Canaan, and Egypt. Through them, the Hittite society was able to influence the Jerusalem united monarchy.²⁴⁵

Finally, several official letters have been found addressed to the king’s mother in Ugarit, where the queen-mother must also have held a similar position. There, she was

call the *'adath* (lady), the feminine of *'adon* (lord), and thus was probably the equivalent of *gevurah*. Another of her titles was *rabitū*, 'great lady', an epithet she shared with the goddess she most likely represented in the sacred marriage; Athirat. According to the Ras Shamra Akkadian texts, this queen-mother intervened in political affairs.²⁴⁶ Other Ugaritic literature indicates that the queen-mother was the earthly counterpart of Athirat; therefore she was clearly associated with the Athirat cult.²⁴⁷ Further, certain texts indicate that there was a *hieros gamos* in the Ugaritic cultus. The Nikkal text, 1:7, shows that the queen's cultic function was to play the part of the *glmt*, the 'virgin' (Hebrew *almah*, girl), a designation for the mother-goddess, in the sacred marriage ceremony. She later gives birth to the royal heir and becomes the queen-mother.²⁴⁸ In III Krt II:25, Keret's wife is to bear a son, Yassib, who is to be nourished by the goddess Athirat's milk and suckled at the goddess Anat's breast. In Lagash, the goddess Ninhursag's sacred milk nourished the king. To drink a goddess' milk not only presents the son as the future king, but also identifies the queen with the goddess.²⁴⁹

However, it does seem that, over time, there was a gradual transition away from the physical union of the human couple representing the deities, which seems to first have originated in Babylon and spread to other Mesopotamian cities, then elsewhere in the Near East or Mediterranean cultures. Whenever it started, eventually, everywhere, human sexuality was no longer physically enacted in the rite, and the interchange between divine and human completely lost its power due to the lack of the human factor in the conjugal union. At that point, the lifeless ritual no longer put the people, through the king, into any particular relationship with the divine, and lost its appeal, except as a vague and abstract idea, though it still secured blessings for the king.²⁵⁰ This theory

proposes that, in such a reduced ritual, goddesses, and women, could play only the role of a mother who could be deposed, for they no longer had anything to do with the king's pathway to the world of the divine or his special status.²⁵¹ Nevertheless, whether symbolic or not, this sacred sexual union certainly took place in the imagination of the worshipers, and the king really did make love to the goddess.²⁵² Finally, the entire union eventually became metaphorical and symbolic, where each individual could spiritually unite with the divine, as in Jewish and Christian Mysticism.²⁵³

b. Attendants.

When discussing the ancient Near Eastern setting for the Hebrew Bible, various aspects of Mesopotamian society and culture can serve as predecessors for certain Israelite practices. Mesopotamian antecedents are particularly sought in the religious and ritual areas.²⁵⁴ As we have just seen, in the 3rd millennium, the Sumerian term *nu-gig*, which is the compound *nu* + *gig*, meaning 'one who is taboo, sacrosanct', occurs both in relation to the women's status and as an epithet of several goddesses, such as Inanna, Aruru/Ninmah, Nanay(a), and Nin-Isina.²⁵⁵ In the Sumerian Codex of Lipit-Ishtar, the *nu-gig* is mentioned as living in her father's house like an heir and could marry and have children; all of this was presumably during the time she exercised her office. She appears in pre-Sargonic Lagash ration lists alongside important members of society and married to men in high position.²⁵⁶ Later, a *nu-gig-gal*, a chief *nu-gig*, is mentioned in neo-Sumerian Lagash. Beyond her personal life, the public services she performed seem to have been linked to fertility and childbirth rites, paralleling her wet-nurse function, which

involved solely women. These were motherhood aspects unrelated to the erotic facet of her role.²⁵⁷ However, when considering that the *nu-gig* epithet is used in nurturing descriptions, as seen in *ama nu-gig*, it seems to refer to Inanna as *ama*, a mother.²⁵⁸

The Akkadian lexical equivalent for the Sumerian *nu-gig* was *qadishtu* (and also *ishtaritu*), a title meaning ‘holy, consecrated, or set-apart woman’ (from the same root as the Hebrew *qedeshah*; קִדְּשׁ).²⁵⁹ While the Sumerian *nin-dingir/en* priestess became the Akkadian *entu*, it is possible that, at one point after the Old Babylonian period, the *nu-gig* and *lukur*’s functions may have been merged into the Akkadian institution of *qadishtu*, since they were similar in nature.²⁶⁰ Thus, if we transpose the Sumerian female royal-priestly titles to Israel, the *nin* would correspond to the *gevirah*, while the *lukur* would equate with the *qedeshah*.²⁶¹ The *qadishtu*, in the Old Babylonian legal system (c. 1880-1550 BCE), appears with other classes of code-regulated women – *naditu*, *kulmashitu*, and *ugbabbu* – each organized priestess group was usually dedicated to the service of a male deity, having a special relationship with a goddess, consort of the god.²⁶² The *naditu* priestesses were royal and noble women whose primary spiritual duty was to address daily prayers and offerings to the god and goddess of the temple to which they belonged. While certain categories amongst them were allowed to marry, some were expected to remain chaste or just childless, and their duties did not include ritual sex.²⁶³ The *qadishtu*, however, in documents from Sumeria and Babylonia, was a priestess, prominent among sacred women that generally remained in the sanctuary and might have performed sacred sexual rites. Though she was under her own control and authority, enjoying a high degree of freedom, her sexuality was controlled by celibacy or marriage.

She interpreted the god's will, granted blessings or curses, tended the sacred flame, and performed the water rites for rainmaking.²⁶⁴

In Middle and Neo-Assyrian ritual texts, the *qadishtu* was a recognized presence at sanctuaries, partaking in sacrificial offerings and other ritual functions. In one Assyrian ritual, the *qadishtu* used salt to undo a light-heartedly sworn oath. It is possible that the *qedeshah* played a similar role in Israel since the Bible tells of women who took oaths and vows (Num 30:3-16). Another text mentions the *qadishtu* as being involved in making vestments for the god Shamash; similarly, the *qedeshot* wove dresses for Asherah (2Kgs 23:4-7). The *qadishtu* was also identified with gender-specific female activities, such as procreation and nurturing.²⁶⁵ She had a ritual function in purification ceremonies, as in the Old Babylonian Kish literary composition entitled 'The Contest between the Tamarisk and the Palm'.²⁶⁶ According to the Babylonian Code, the *qadishtu* was able to marry, have children, receive children for adoption, own land and other properties; some even engaged in business and legal transactions.²⁶⁷ According to Babylonian and Assyrian sources, the *qadishtu* also appears to have presided over wet-nursing and childbirth, perhaps overseeing the spiritual aspect of childbirth while the midwife tended to the physical birthing, though the *qadishtu* might have also been a midwife.²⁶⁸ An Ugaritic Akkadian text also indicates that the title and status could be acquired through inheritance, rather than through consecration to the deity.²⁶⁹ Thus, during the span of various Mesopotamian cultures, the *qadishtu* seem to have had more than one function.²⁷⁰

As Woolley found, we know, from plenty of clauses in the law, that aspiring priestesses in Ancient Mesopotamia had to be virgins in order to qualify for entry into the

service of the deity.²⁷¹ Yet, Henshaw does not deny that some devotees did engage in ritual sex.²⁷² Sumerian and Semitic texts undeniably show that the *qadishtu* was not a prostitute, for her sexual practice was left to her discretion.²⁷³ None of the references to *qdsh* in Ugarit or *qadishtu* in Mesopotamian texts describe their functions as ‘sacred prostitution’. Therefore, scholars looking for a source that would support their sacred prostitute theory found it in the writings of the Hebrew Bible, Herodotus (c. 480-425BCE), Strabo (c. 64 BCE-19 CE), Lucian (c. 115-200 CE), and the early Christian writers, like Clement (2nd century CE), Lactantius (c. 240-320 CE), and St. Augustine (354-430 CE). All of these texts, except certain sections of the Hebrew Bible, are relatively late sources, and all suffer from a cultural and religious bias.²⁷⁴

Henshaw quickly pointed out certain problems with Herodotus’ account, which are also applicable to other early writers, as well as early scholars, especially Frazer who relied perhaps too heavily on these early sources. They all claimed that, in many parts of the eastern Mediterranean, before their marriage, a solemn religious practice obliged all women, whether rich or poor, to offer their virginity and prostitute themselves to strangers at the service of the great mother-goddess at her sanctuary, and to give the wages earned by this sanctified harlotry to the goddess. Since some of these women had to wait at the sanctuary for years before performing their religious duty, so the temple precinct would have been very crowded. However, whereas Herodotus recounted this forced prostitution as performed by amateur women only once in a lifetime, Frazer labelled the ‘temple women’ as professional ‘religious prostitutes’ in the service of the religion of the goddess, which limited the number of women involved, yet seems to still have been inaccurate.²⁷⁵ Those who study ancient civilizations, based on the amount of

archaeological discovery to date, have never come across anything remotely near the practice of sacred prostitution as an actual ritual function in Ancient Mesopotamia.²⁷⁶

IV. The Purpose of the Rite.

Alster believed that the love songs contained more than one layer of meaning, and he made a distinction between the sacred marriage songs and those who were set in daily life with no mythological frame or reference to the king. Though the temple cult and the royal court appear in some of these sacred marriage songs, Leick similarly argued that many features pointed to the normal wedding ceremonies of ordinary people. It is possible that these literary works originated as traditional folk songs that accompanied the various *rite de passage* stages attached with a wedding. And since they had a strong female presence and emotional involvement, Leick related them to the world of women. The purpose of these 'bridal songs', thus, was to associate the young girl with a suitable divine role model, Inanna, in order to ease the bride's feelings of ambivalence and anxiety when awaiting her wedding. As goddess of love and sexuality, Inanna's function was to indicate the importance of erotic satisfaction within marriage.²⁷⁷ Jacobsen assigned only what he classified as the 'proper' wedding songs to the sacred marriage. Both Jacobsen and Leick argued that these highly erotic wooing and wedlock songs are literary courtly love poetry written in the polygynous royal household for entertainment. The argument presents the royal wives involved in a writing competition where they read their love lyrics to a literate audience, the court, in hopes to win the attention of the

‘master’. According to Leick, erotic expertise was important, which was demonstrated in seductive love poetry recitation, music-making, and dancing.²⁷⁸

Others have argued that, based on the fact that many of these love songs end with liturgical and ritual subscripts, they were not mere secular love poetry depicting the love between any young man or woman, but religious hymns ideologically recounting the sacred marriage ritual in which a deity, or woman embodying a deity, and the king were involved. These subscripts were written by the ancient Sumerian scribes in order to categorize these songs and designate them as cultic genre of work. A significant majority of these love and marriage hymns have been classified as *balbale* songs. Many kings are reported in other texts to have had *balbale* songs written for them. The word *balbale* seems to refer to the literary form of these texts, which follow a speech structure, whether they are dialogues or monologues. One of the outstanding features of these *balbale* songs is the fact that they are short. In addition, there is a lack of descriptive features that would explain the events that took place during the ritual. This clearly indicated that, for the ancient Sumerians, these texts were not only cultic, but they were meant to be recited during the rite, in this case, the sacred marriage.²⁷⁹ This rite was actually either performed repeatedly or only once. The question still remains as for which occasion was the sacred marriage rite performed. There are many proposed theories on the subject; 1) fertility rite, 2) coronation ceremony, 3) legitimization and deification of the king, 4) determining of the fate (*nam-tar*) and obtaining blessings for the king, 5) producing a royal heir, 6) installing an *en* or *nin-dingir* priestess, 7) practicing the *en*-ship of Inanna, 8) secular rite of passage love songs, and finally, 9) royal court love poetry.²⁸⁰ The last two have already been briefly mentioned above. Below I offer more detailed descriptions

of some of these other theories and merge a few together under umbrella titles for the sake of theme and relevancy. Thus I will discuss the Fertility Rite as a New Year ceremony, the Coronation festival and everything relevant to kingship, and finally the Priestess Promotion Ritual and rite of passage. I believe that the sacred marriage amalgamates together many of these features, attesting to its power and importance.

a. New Year Fertility Rite.

The poetic hymns recounting the yearly enthronement ritual and its fabulous sacred union of the god and the goddess were not secular love poems or songs between a man and a woman. Rather, deriving our understanding from Frazer's *Golden Bough*, these songs were meant to be recited in the course of the deities' sacred ritual congress that provided a powerful symbol, essential to ensure the union of forces involved in the creation and re-creation of the entire cosmos. The divine pair was stimulated through the yearly sympathetic ceremony that involved the earthly, though temporary, visible component of the world's regenerative processes. This sacred union of the human sexes set in motion the renewal forces of nature, and society's productivity and fruitfulness, to abundantly multiply for the subsequent year.²⁸¹ The most basic need of all living creatures was dependent on the ongoing cycle of life. Faced with threats of drought and salination because of over irrigating the small amount of resource-poor land, the Mesopotamian culture, as is well represented in its imagery, was religiously obsessed with the belief that its agricultural and pastoral economy could be sustained only by continually reviving the forces of life. To the Mesopotamians, it was obvious that the

procreation, propagation, proliferation, and fecundity of the land and the animals (and, to a lesser extent, the human womb²⁸²) was insured by their deities' passionate love and desire that culminated in their sexual ritual union that generated the fertilizing semen, 'the water of the heart', for the divine womb, the earth.²⁸³

So the people put their need into a story, acted it out, and prayed for it in fertility cults. Thus, at its origin, it would seem that the holy union was a seasonal ceremony with rites collectively performed by the whole community to provide for this regeneration.²⁸⁴ The word 'fertility' is now used to describe both the earth's ability to bear fruit and the capacity of humans and animals to reproduce. Yet, the Sumerians treated the two gifts as analogous, though not identical. Later, biblical writers linked together the human/animal and earth fertility.²⁸⁵ Regardless, even if some of the sacred marriage songs clearly mention fertility, the rite was not technically a fertility ritual, and it was not performed to induce it. As Steinkeller and Frymer-Kensky noted, the fertility ritual does not really 'cause' fertility – if it could, rituals would not have to be repeated – rather, the king and the goddess' intimate relationship acknowledged the community's dependence on the land's prosperity and its desire to assure the continuation of the natural cycle. So the divine marriage was clearly meant to sustain fertility.²⁸⁶ Since rituals and prayers for fertility decreased anxiety about harvest, naturally, religion was a good way to motivate people and enabled them for agricultural labour in producing this stable surplus. Not surprisingly, the early temple institutions coordinated irrigation and collected the surplus production that allowed the society to combine technological, demographic, and economic expansion. For their role in helping produce *he-gal* (abundance), many temples were praised for the fertility and prosperity they brought to their cities.²⁸⁷

There was an abundance of prayers invoking the cooperation of many gods, overseeing all the forces of nature, to get them involved in the annual religious activities, focused on celebrating *he-gal*, in order to succeed in assuring the land's fertility. The sacred marriage was therefore the primary fertility prayer, expressing a necessary union that symbolically accentuated this important principle, for which many kings have been praised because of their role in the sustaining of fertility.²⁸⁸ It certified that the fertility of the world was assured through the concerted effort of gods and humans. The earth's fertility thus depended on the humans, who brought agricultural abundance through their work in the fields, their fertilizing water canals, and their storehouses, while the gods brought fertility through the control of natural forces – rain, air, sun, and soil (cf. Gen 2:5).²⁸⁹ In time, the community or council elected to be represented by a single individual who would personify and epitomize the entire group. At first, they centralized themselves in the figure of the *en* priest, who enjoyed more than religious ritual authority; he also possessed political powers.²⁹⁰ Then, over time, the king began to perform the ritual.²⁹¹ Ultimately, however, it was not their kingly position that enabled the kings of the Ur III and Isin dynasties to partake in the symbolic marriage with Inanna. Rather, it was the fact that they were counted as the archaic *ens* of Inanna at Uruk, which allowed them to be regarded at once as the vessel and the steward of communal vitality. This qualified them to be the symbolic spouse of Inanna and maintain a stable relationship with the divine order. Often, the crown prince was appointed to this cultic office. However, on various high holidays, especially the New Year, the king himself may have assumed this role. Consequently, the king, as the people's representative, in order to ensure and maintain the community's existence, did all the things that were previously

done by the group as a whole.²⁹² Thus, while out of reach from ordinary humans, the powerful gods became less remote, and could be enticed to assure the fertility of the world, when the king, enabled by his people to control and balance the scarce resources, accessed the divine world, through the fertile bed.²⁹³

Though the mother-goddess controls human and animal reproduction, in most *hieros gamos* texts, the prime divine figure is neither she nor mother-earth, for neither are a fertility-goddess in the conventional sense; they have no power in ensuring agricultural fecundity. Rather, in the majority of these songs, it is a goddess representing the lust that allows for sexual union to take place, giving prominence to sexuality in the cosmic order.²⁹⁴ The reason for this might be that, though the goddess was integral for the fertility and prosperity of her land, these divine gifts were possible only in conjunction with one or more male deities. While the goddess was worshiped during these fertility rituals, normally the focus was on the male consort, often a 'dying-god'.²⁹⁵ According to Kramer, during the New Year festival, it was the reigning monarch's pleasant duty to perform the sacred marriage with the one who transcends all boundaries, the desirable liminal-goddess of procreation, fertility, and fecundity. The purpose of performing this sexual union was for the king to guard 'the life-breath of all lands' by sparking these great natural forces into motion to regenerate all life, and inspire and organize his people to be at the service of his divine mistress. As the one who controlled the land's productivity and fruitfulness, the young nubile goddess blessed the king with a prosperous reign and promised to grant fertility and abundance for the land and the wombs of women and beasts on through the next generation.²⁹⁶ Both Cooper and Steinkeller agreed that, through the dramatic sacred sexual act, the king, and his people,

established and maintained personal and social ties with the gods, creating a human-divine partnership.²⁹⁷ Wherever the location – Isin, Ur, Uruk – the various texts indicate that the ritual followed the same pattern everywhere.²⁹⁸

The *Gudea Temple Hymn* records how king Gudea of Lagash built a temple to Ningirsu and prepped the bed-quarters of the goddess Baba. It is evident that the purpose of this construction was to evoke fertility. The hymn does not fail to relate that when Baba entered her room and lay down with Ningirsu, they ‘made the bed good together’ and she caused green gardens to bear fruit.²⁹⁹ Numerous sacred marriage texts, like *The King and Inanna* and *Plow my Vulva*, echo the wish for fertility. They present imageries of Inanna as the personification of a well-watered field, or her breasts themselves are her field, which are all powerful agricultural metaphors. The entire sexual intercourse is metaphorically illustrated in agricultural terms, such as ‘plowing’ and ‘watering’, which emphasizes the purpose of this ritual. Though the sexual imagery in these prayers is obvious, rare are the poems that actually speak of human fecundity³⁰⁰ by mentioning impregnation or progeny, which was more the primary concern of the individual or personal marriages of normal human beings. Rather, the sacred marriage texts reverberate with many levels of meanings and purposes, demonstrating the parallel between the female body and the earth, and the metaphysical connection between human sexuality and cosmic survival. Regeneration is made explicit by the most elemental physical embodiment; the symbolic interaction between the female and male opposite forces. These were at play in the ritual sexual divine mystery of the king and the goddess’ conjoining that brought, first and foremost, fertility to the land, upon which

their animal flocks and they themselves depended. After all, the Mesopotamians relied on this ritual to insure the growth of food for the subsistence of the populace.³⁰¹

Certainly, the pattern of the seasonal ceremonies fell into two main divisions. First there are rites that we might describe as 'emptying', which depict the eclipse of life and annual death of vegetation during harvest time. After which follows rites of 'filling', which symbolize the revitalization that comes at the beginning of the new lease on life. These two groups of the seasonal pattern can be further divided into four major stereotyped elements. The first rite is one of mortification, which begins with the god's combat and ends in his passion and departure or death. This state symbolizes the close of one life that ensues at the end of the year, while the beginning of the next life is not yet assured. It was observed with lenten periods, feasts, asceticism, and other expressions of mortification or suspended animation.³⁰² Next follows the purgation and lamentation rites, where the community rids itself of their physical and moral sins, contagion, and evil influences, which might impair the renewal of prosperity of the coming year. Invigoration rites follow, in which the community attempted to animate its declining condition by inducing an epiphany, through mass mating rites, and other such magical actions, in order to prompt the rebirth imperative to promote fertility and abundance, relight the sun, produce rain, and so forth. Finally there were jubilation rites, celebrated with a communion feast, denoting the community's relief when the New Year began and their way of life was reassured for another year.³⁰³

Thus, the New Year celebration became focused on the figure of the king, who stood as the representative of the whole community. So during the mortification rites that came at the end of the lease of life, the king alone suffered a ritual passion, in which he

fasted and abased himself, only to be ultimately 'killed', or deposed. While originally, in order to achieve regeneration, the whole group performed acts of sexual activity, over time, the ritual was enacted in a specially prepared room at the sanctuary of the goddess, where the king, or a chosen substitute playing the role of the *en* priest, copulated with a chaste *entu* priestess, often the previous king's daughter, generally referred to simply by the goddess' name. After the sacred marriage, rites of jubilation performed by the whole community, greeted the world's rebirth so as to cast the spell of abundance. These were replaced by feasts and banquets, now held in the king's palace, that attempted to insure fertility. The festival was accompanied by music, song, and dance, after the king was ceremonially reinstated, or, if he has been killed, replaced by a successor.³⁰⁴

Repeatedly, Sumerian and Babylonian texts refer to the sacred marriage rite, which, as the poet of the great *Iddin-Dagan A* hymn tells us, was already a time-honoured ceremony, performed on New Year's Eve, by the time of king Iddin-Dagan (1950 BCE). Another poem, involving king Shu-Sin, inscribed on the little Istanbul clay tablet, corroborates that the ritual was performed during the New Year celebrations.³⁰⁵ Steinkeller found that at Isin, Lagash, Babylon, and other cities, the sacred marriage ritual seems to have formed part of the New Year celebrations.³⁰⁶ When considering Dumuzi's mythological half-year imprisonment in the Netherworld, the available evidence suggests that his marriage to Inanna was celebrated at least during the New Year's festivities, upon his ascension. However, as Jacobsen discovered from the textual evidence, the ritual could also have been performed bi-annually. He differentiated between the texts that refer to Dumuzi as the 'shepherd', typical of Nippur, and those naming him the 'gardener', celebrated in Uruk. In the 'shepherd' texts, the emphasis is on the mating

aspect that brings spring and the flourishing of nature. These texts were probably used for the sacred marriage ceremony celebrated in the spring. The 'gardener' texts, on the other hand, concentrate on the date palm's power for fertility and the abundance of the harvest for the storehouse. These poems clearly indicate that they were recited for the divine union ritual performed in the autumn.³⁰⁷ At times, it appears that the ritual may even have been enacted monthly, perhaps on the last day of the month when the moon disappeared and re-emerged. This is certainly the case with Nanshe and Nindara's marriage, said to be celebrated both at the New Year and on a monthly basis. However, to date, only two of the Dumuzi-Inanna love songs contain evidence for the sacred marriage as a calendrical event; most of the other texts do not comment on the actual timing of the marriage.³⁰⁸ Finally, as Frankfort and Frymer-Kensky pointed out, since the texts fall into many different types of rituals, the sacred marriage was much more than a fertility ritual, and another one of its objective was the king's deification.³⁰⁹

b. Coronation Festival.

According to some epic poems, it would appear that the attractive, sensuous, and voluptuous goddess of love Inanna was involved in the sacred marriage rite of one of Sumer's leading cities, Uruk, several generations before Dumuzi came on the scene, dating to about 3000 BCE or even earlier. Perhaps shortly thereafter, some of her priests and theologians conceived of the reassuring idea of having their king become the lover and husband of the goddess, allowing him to share in her invaluable fertility power and divine immortality.³¹⁰ In origin, it seems that a priest performed the male part in the

sacred marriage ritual, while the king became involved only later on, by assuming a priestly role. As they had no historical precedent to support their reign, or dynastic principle assuring their succession rights, the earliest Mesopotamian kings had to demonstrate that they were greater than the rest of the populace.³¹¹ So, according to Kraus, the Isin kings found a way to elevate themselves by being ritually linked to the goddess, through desire and sexuality, in order to validate their extravagant phrases and royal epithets³¹², like 'spouse of Inanna'. He suggested that they might even have created the whole sacred marriage ritual ideal, in order to achieve intimacy with the divine in a way that was not attainable by other humans, thus becoming fused with the divine bridegroom. This credited them with having an influence on the prosperity of the land far exceeding the normal Mesopotamian terminology of the determinative.³¹³

So the king was a hero, whose perilous journey was a labour of re-attainment and rediscovery. After having sought and dangerously won godly powers, he was publicly borne in a festive procession to the temple, which also reinforced his special status.³¹⁴ There, according to the *Blessing of Shulgi* hymn, Inanna enumerated her importance to the king as his leader in battle, his helpmate in combat, his champion in the assembly, and finally as his life while he is on the road. She then listed all the ways in which Dumuzi was fit to be her consort and king. Thus he was said to be fit to hold high his head on the lofty dais, sit on the lapis lazuli throne, wear the crown, hold the holy sceptre, and wear the holy sandals, the long garments, and the garment of kingship. He was also fit to carry the mace, the longbow and arrow, the throw-stick, and the sling. Because of these attributes he was fit to prance like a 'lapis lazuli' calf on her holy bosom. Finally, because Inanna held Dumuzi dear, and because he was the beloved of Ningal, her mother,

she bestowed a long life upon him, and requested that An and Enlil bequeath an altered fate for him.³¹⁵ Since many texts do not specify whether the rite was performed annually or at more prolonged intervals, when considering the close association of the sacred marriage rite and the Sumerian tutelary city-deities' blessings upon the kingship, it seems to suggest that the ritual was performed only once, early in the king's reign, as a type of coronation rite.³¹⁶ Indeed, in *The King and Inanna* text, Inanna's divine steward, Ninshubur, urges the goddess to give the king a firm royal throne for his kingship.³¹⁷

Van Buren also believed that the sacred marriage, enacted during the New Year festival, resulted in the deification of the Mesopotamian king, or, as the texts says, 'the king who is the god'. However, in early times, as van Buren and others claimed, the king's divinity and authority may not have outlasted the ritual, and was probably annually reinforced. But later on, it would seem that the rulers' deification, as expressed by the use of the divine determinative before their names, was made possible, sealed, and permanent by sharing the goddess' bed and playing the god's role in the *hieros gamos*.³¹⁸ According to the evidence, only some kings have the star-shape ideogram appended to their name, which signifies that they were a 'god' (*dingir* in Sumerian and *ilu* in Akkadian). Other individuals, such as Gilgamesh, were said to have been men with 'demon-like qualities', *lillu*. The mother of the first Akkadian king to rule Sumer, Sargon of Agade, was said to have been a *lillu*. Through ritual transformation, Sargon's grandson, king Naram-Sin, attained divine approval and adopted the epithet *ilu*, 'god'. The Akkadian epithet *ilu* later became the Semitic suffix *el* (Arabic *il*), meaning 'god', used in many names for angels and men in the Bible.³¹⁹ It should also be noted that this graphic device is not alone in suggesting the kings' deification. Some of these kings did

not adopt the divine determinative at the beginning of their reigns, but only at a later stage. Though it is true that not all the Mesopotamian royal documents indicate deification, a few texts establish beyond a doubt that occasionally a fusion of humanity and divinity took place in the person of certain rulers.³²⁰

However, Frymer-Kensky disagreed with Hallo's idea that the king's divine attributes alternated between his claim of godhood, through divine descent, and that of 'god's son', born from a sacred marriage, the latter being a meaningful title important to his claim to the throne and his right to exercise his proper power.³²¹ The early kings of Sumer, regardless of who their divine mother may have been, regarded their god-mother and nurturer as being the mother-goddess Ninhursag, one of the three principal gods. By using the 'nourished by the good milk of Ninhursag' epithet in their royal inscriptions, the pre-Sargonic kings consistently acknowledged the prominent role that the mother-goddess had in granting them divine authority.³²²

There are a few songs that identify the king by the term 'child of Enlil'. In two specific hymns the term seems to serve as a first step in bringing the king closer to the divinity, in this case being one of Enlil's sons, the god Urash, with whom the king was to be absorbed. The text, known as *The Deification of Lipit-Ishtar*, contains many phrases that apply to Lipit-Ishtar as well as to Urash, such as when Anu appoints Lipit-Ishtar as king of the land, then promises Urash a victorious reign and the power to champion justice 'like the sun-god'. Then there is the puzzling statement requesting that the goddess Ishtar 'prolong thy life'. Obviously, this verse addresses the mortal king Lipit-Ishtar and not to the fertility-god Urash.³²³ The text's construction suggests that the song cycle's aim was to be recited as a deification ritual meant to prepare the king for his

exalted function in the sacred marriage ritual before he entered into the presence of Ishtar. So the text shows how Lipit-Ishtar and Urash were to be clearly identified as one and the same for the king to be raised to a divine level and become worthy of the goddess.³²⁴ The goddess Ishtar speaks highly of herself in the introduction of the song to Urash. After mentioning that her father gave her heaven and earth, she declares herself 'mistress of heaven' and a deity without equals. Thus, as it is generally indicated in the texts, it appears that only the kings, who had been chosen and commanded by a goddess to share her couch as her bridegroom, could be worthy of her, and became deified. As the *Shulgi Hymn X* states: "O Shulgi, thou art created for the pleasure of Inanna."³²⁵ These rulers belonged to the same period as the Sumerian sacred marriage texts.³²⁶

Shulgi was not the last king to appear as an avatar of Dumuzi and celebrate his marriage with Inanna. Another example can be found in the *Iddin-Dagan* hymn, which realistically recounts the goddess and the king's physical union. Inanna's bridegroom is actually king Iddin-Dagan of Isin, here alternately named Ama-ushumgal-ana, which is an epithet of Dumuzi. The texts also show that this fusion of god and king continued as the couple emerged from the bedchamber to the palace and attended the banquet for the festivities that followed.³²⁷ Yet another interesting and important text, which appears in two exemplars, one published by de Genouillac and the other by Hallo, was treated by Kramer. They are important because, while the first exemplar refers to king Ishme-Dagan, the same lines in the second exemplar are replaced by references to Dumuzi.³²⁸ As this account clearly states, the king was simultaneously the head of the state and the avatar of the god Dumuzi when performing the Sumerian royal sacred marriage ritual.³²⁹

c. Priestess Promotion Ritual.

The economic aspect of the ancient mystery cults of Osiris, Isis, Adonis, the Syrian goddess, Attis, Mithras, Dionysus, Orphism, etc, has been established by Mannhardt, Frazer, Reinach, Harrison, Goblet d'Alviella, Cumont, and several others. Though these mystery religions have sparked extensive interest in modern times, the rites have been closely studied only as sympathetic rites meant to coerce cosmic and terrestrial reproduction or fertility.³³⁰ Yet these mystery rites were more than sympathetic fertility rituals performed to secure crops and herd production for the community; they were also rites of passage vital for the fertility of the women who took part in the ritual. Westermarck perceived that these rites, involving sacred virgins³³¹, were written and constructed following a *rite de passage* pattern for the woman and had many elements in common with the celebration of a young woman's first menstruation in order to insure the girl's fertility³³². Frayne also found strikingly similar elements in the sacred marriage ritual, which he perceived as a ritual inaugurating the high-priestess, where the neophyte assumed her new position by submitting herself to ceremonies that transformed her from a young girl to a bride.³³³ For this reason, Frayne suggested that the sacred marriage may have been occasionally performed, especially since there is no evidence, in the Sumerian period, for it to have been an annual event. He therefore postulated that this special ceremony took place when a new *entu* priestess was designated.³³⁴

The many brief hymnic year formula passages, like 'The year the *entu* of Nanna was chosen by omens', though they do not tell us much, specifically correlate with the sacred marriage ritual. The evidence from archival texts supports the hypothesis that they

identify the female participant of the sacred marriage rite, suggesting that the formulas were involved in the designation and inauguration of new *entu* priestesses. For example, the *Iddin-Dagan* year formula hymn, found in a date list, recounts the ceremony by which Inanna's *entu* 'was chosen by omens'. Omens were typically revealed through oracular designation (*mash-e pa*), divination, reading of a sheep's liver markings, or by reading the oil drop patterns on water. Frequently, after an oracle selected a priestess in one year, the chosen woman was anointed shortly thereafter in the temple, where the *entu* was elevated (*il*) or installed (*hun*). In such a year formula, from BIN 9, no. 435, Ninzuanna, the king's daughter, was chosen by omens, and, in the following year, she was elevated to the office of *entu*, becoming a priestess of the god Lugalmarada. This strongly suggests that the daughter of Ishbi-erra was almost certainly an *entu* priestess of the god Lugalmarada, and her name, Nin-zu-an-na, seems to be nothing more than a variant of the name of Lugalmarada's divine spouse Ninzianna.³³⁵

The evidence suggests that, on succeeding days, the sacred marriage ritual began in the house of the priestess' father with a series of ceremonies equivalent to a betrothal. There she performed various sacrifices and ceremonies. On the 6th day, she bathed and performed all the necessary purification preparations, after which she was presented with new consecrated red garments. She was then adorned, ritually combed, and coiffed elaborately, in order to be the perfect bride, before eating a meal and leaving to meet her groom.³³⁶ There are only small differences in details between the consecration to the deity ceremony and an ordinary wedding ceremony.³³⁷ Most modern scholars suggested the possibility that an additional group of women, the 'choir' of Inanna's cult personnel and Sumerian devotees, was involved in the sacred marriage performance. The *Iddin-*

Dagan A love song, for example, mentions a procession of ‘bridesmaids’ walking ahead of the priestess incarnating goddess, as she left her house with her head covered like a bride.³³⁸ After which the king led a similar procession to the door of the sacred residence, the *gipar*, where the awaiting priestess greeted ‘the god’.³³⁹

In Sumer, the area of the temple known as a threshing floor served as a storage repository and redistribution centre for grain from the harvest, fruits of an abundant yield, and young animals, and was the prototype of the later sacred *gipar*.³⁴⁰ The *gipar* (storehouse), in early times, was a simple reed hut, which later developed into a multi room complex of buildings that included the private living quarters of the *en* priestess or priest, who assumed the deity’s role on earth. There too lived the attendants, reminiscent of the *qedeshot* who lived in the Jerusalem Temple complex (2Kgs 23:4-7). And finally, it also had a temple that contained an especially sacred chamber known as the *gigunmu*, which had a *guenna*, throne room, right on the outside of it. Hallo and van Dijk contended that this sacred chamber was also probably used as a birthing hospital-hut for women.³⁴¹ Needless to say that the women’s social role, in the storage of household goods, is reflected in the storage quarters of the priestess, being itself patterned on the goddess’ storage area of the temple complex. Thus, she was the supervisor of the whole land’s depository and she required a sense of social order and justice to manage the temple estates. Naturally, all the *gipar*’s activities, simulating the proper running of a household and yet different because of the scale, focused on maintaining the link and parallel between the priestess and the goddess, for the administrator-goddesses modeled the behaviour of queens. Meanwhile, the king, who probably represented the living spirit within vegetation and animals, personified the goddess’ divine partner, the god. The

abundance and preservation of the harvest, upon which urban civilization depended, relied on the success of their union in the *hieros gamos* performed in the sacred storehouse of the *gipar*.³⁴² According to records, in Neo-Babylonian times (c. 590 BCE), king Nabonidus rebuilt Ur's last *gipar* for his daughter, the *en* priestess Ennigaldi-Nanna, which testifies to this tradition's longevity.³⁴³

The ritual also involved the setting up of a throne dais in the temple for the one who determines the fate of all the lands, oversees the true first day, and perfects the *me*, i.e., 'the lady of the palace'. This information is corroborated from both a number of archival texts from Isin and year formulas, like those of the kings Ishbi-Erra and Shulishu, which record the disbursements of materials used to construct cult objects for the ceremony. On a text dated a few months before the beginning of the year, we also find the mention of wool sent for the palanquin of the installation of Enlil's new *en*. A special coverlet was also spread over a bed that was made and set up for her. Then, in the evening, the priestess sat upon her throne. There, she ate a ritual meal and received presents and various beautiful pieces of jewellery – special earrings, bracelets, a red turban, and a breastplate – from the elders, including a stool.³⁴⁴ The lady's throne and bed, disbursed alongside the other ritual items, mentioned in the BIN 9, no. 435 archive, are similar to the ones found in the *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* story and bears other striking parallels with the *Iddin-Dagan hymn A*. This strongly suggests that they were cult furniture to be used in the New Year's ceremony that took place on the day the goddess was caused to ritually lie down. Both items were meant to be shared with 'the king, the god' ^{Fg 4}.³⁴⁵ Priestesses chanted as they bathed the chosen priestess' feet, before

she lay down on the bed and had ritual intercourse, as part of the initiation ceremony designating the new *entu* priestess.³⁴⁶

In Ancient Near Eastern texts, it was the women that were called upon to perform in the cult as symbols of sexuality. These high-priestesses, consecrated to a deity, were not sacred prostitutes. The use of the term 'sacred prostitution', usually by male historians, is misleading. This carnal ritual was not understood as being a service to men. Rather, it was a way for women to surrender themselves to the goddess and become identified with her by having sexual relations with the king, himself incarnating the god, during the annual *hieros gamos* mystery.³⁴⁷ It is strongly evident that, in Mesopotamia, the king was the obedient servant of the goddess bride. For example, as the texts emphasize, kings, like Ishme-Dagan or even Gilgamesh, reported that Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth, chose them for her beloved husband. No matter how domineering the god, when it came to the sacred marriage, the goddess was the active partner that took the initiative. And through her priestess, the goddess bestowed the gift of life on the king.³⁴⁸ In this way, the priestess, incarnating the goddess, mediated between the divine and the human worlds, giving us a clue to what lay behind the deification of kings in Mesopotamia, and by his intimate union with the goddess/priestess, the king accessed the world of the gods, which was impossible for other humans to reach.³⁴⁹

Then followed a festive banquet, celebrated by all the members of a particular group, and especially by the sacred couple. This was a rite of incorporation in which the goddess, through the priestess, was brought into the human world and presented to the public.³⁵⁰ These events – Inanna's ceremonial dressing, her meeting with Dumuzi at the *gipar*'s door, the setting up of the bridal bed, and, finally, the door opening after the

marriage – are described in such texts as *Love in the Gipar* text, found in Kramer, and *The Uruk text*, in Jacobsen.³⁵¹ The mention of the birds, grain, orchards, and gardens at the end of the hymn clearly indicates that the new *en* or *entu* priestess' installation resulted in the land's fertility and abundance.³⁵²

Olsen wrote that, throughout religious history, the character of goddesses often, though not always, contrasted with the feminine concept of tranquility, passivity, and inferiority. Rather, in addition to being the attractive temptress with alluring charms, the goddesses also had transformative powers over life-giving, renewal, rebirth, and the mystery of death.³⁵³ Not surprisingly, in addition to representing the goddess in her fertile and life-giving activities, the priestess moreover impersonated her dark and destructive aspect. Thus, the priestess maintained the society's harmonious balance of conflicting life forces, a role that was yearly renewed through the sacred marriage ritual. And so, first-born animals were sacrificed to the goddess of uninhibited sexual love, while, in some cases, if the priestess conceived from the sacred marriage, she was to present the child as a sacrifice, typically by exposing it to the elements and leave it to its fate, which usually resulted in death.³⁵⁴ Because of the law prohibiting a priestess from having children, numerous scholars argued that the high-priestess' role in the sacred marriage is indefinable. Thus, the controversial question, of whether or not the high-priestess actually engaged in sexual intercourse in the ritual remains a concern, especially when considering that she may have been required to avoid pregnancy.³⁵⁵ But childlessness does not necessitate one to be celibate; there are contraceptive measures that can be used, such as anal intercourse or herbal potions.

Yet, the textual and historical evidence seems to be at odds with this view. In some cases, as Hallo discovered, the divine marriage initiation rites, performed in the temple between the god and goddess, or rather their human counterparts, was expected to produce a child, the crown prince, as is attested from archival sources.³⁵⁶ However, this idea, as Hallo himself pointed out, has some problems, upon which Klein and Cooper also commented. The pregnancy prohibition law perhaps referred only to the priestess' relationship with men other than the king, but she was expected to have his child.³⁵⁷ Weadock wrote at length on the high-priestess' role at Ur, and noted, in an untranslated text discussed by Jacobsen, that the gods rewarded Ur-Nammu for his piety by giving him a son to ensure his royal line. The child was presumably conceived at the time of the sacred marriage when Ur-Nammu, as the *en*, assumed the role of Nanna in the rite, and thus the child was born of the *entu* priestess of Nanna in Nippur; i.e., from the goddess Ningal. Further, Hall reported that one hymn reads; "the *en*-priestess, from what he [the king] had laid in her womb, bore a trustworthy man." This sheds considerable light on this festival, suggesting that the sacred marriage was actual rather than symbolic.³⁵⁸

It is because of this ritual that kings, such as Gudea, could claim to have been born of a virgin-goddess, who conceived by an immaculate conception.³⁵⁹ The female's creative and redemptive powers, as the cosmic Mother of the Universe and the human Mother of the Hero, enabled her to have a *Virgin Birth*.³⁶⁰ The mothers of these kings were probably *entu* priestesses, whose divinity is expressed in the very title, *nin-dingir*, 'the lady who is a deity'.³⁶¹ Together, the mortal king, the earthly priestess, and their baby were the centre of the cult, forming some sort of trinity that appeared throughout the Near East, in which the child was perceived as the hero, the saviour, the redeemer.³⁶² Of

course, there was always the possibility that a daughter, not a son, was conceived in the ritual, which might have caused a problem, though this special daughter might have become an *entu*. Another problem with this theory was the sons conceived outside the sacred marriage or born before the king's accession. However, this would explain why sometime the sons that became kings were the oldest, and at others times the youngest.³⁶³

Hallo definitely argued that, though the birth of the crown prince was one of the aims of the sacred marriage, it was not the only one. As we have seen, the *hieros gamos* had a variety of meanings, ranging from the king's own claim to divinity, to his coronation ritual once at the beginning of each reign, or its annual reassertion as part of the New Year festival. It also offered proof of Dumuzi's seasonal resurrection, following the ritual enactment of an astral myth, and guaranteed fertility for the entire land.³⁶⁴ The sacred marriage is a multileveled metaphor that appears to encompass a fertility rite with a priestess inauguration ritual and a coronation ceremony, suggesting an inherited pattern with powerful and poetic dimensions of meaning.³⁶⁵

B. The Judahite Sacred Marriage Rite:

I. Asherah.

a. The Goddess.

Wooden pillars or stylized trees are frequently found in ancient Eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamian religious art.³⁶⁶ The cutting down of the sacred tree in some religions, such as that of the cult of Attis and Cybele³⁶⁷ or Osiris and Isis³⁶⁸, was an important ritual, which re-enacted the death or passion of the deity. A Jungian interpretation perceives the tree as a symbol for both the mother, who embraced and enclosed the son, and the son, who was castrated and killed by that embrace.³⁶⁹ In Assyrian and Canaanite-Phoenician images, animals – lions, caprids (unicorns, goats), fishes with or without water, and/or winged creatures – were frequently represented as guarding, attending, or attacking the ‘sacred tree’. This grouping is an old and widespread motif in the ancient Near East, dating from at least the 3rd millennium BCE, where they represent the fecundity of feminine nature, the goddess, who appears as the creative Earth Mother, mother of nature, animals, and humans, i.e., of all living creatures. Through thousands of years, one of her manifestations was through the sacred tree.³⁷⁰ The sacred tree was the source of the highly prized and jealously guarded fruits of immortality, inspiration, secret knowledge, and wisdom reserved for the gods.³⁷¹ Some scholars claim that, ever since farming was discovered, people noticed the correlation between the earth and moon cycles, and so both came to represent the same generative

power. The two concepts became closely interwoven, making it hard to distinguish whether some of these goddesses were primarily moon or earth deities. Most often, these were but some of the many aspects Near Eastern goddesses possessed; amongst these, a few were also fertility and/or mother-goddesses, though they had sway over cultural advancements and were not limited to a single role.³⁷²

Archaeological evidence suggests that Ashratum/Ashertu is the Amorite precursor of the Israelite Asherah. Her name is found in Akkadian and Hittite inscriptions and other documents dating to c. 1830-1531 BCE.³⁷³ The material presents Ashratum as the wife of the Amorite national god Amurru (Sumerian Mardu/Martu), son of the Mesopotamian god An/Anu.³⁷⁴ The Amorites were the ‘people of the steppe’ and lived in the mountainous region of central and southern Syria. Not surprising that Ashratum’s epithets include *belet-seri*, ‘Lady of the Wilderness/Steppe’, *gashan-gu-edin-na*, ‘Lady of Eden/the Steppe’, and *ina shadem*, ‘[She] of the Mountain’, which identifies her as a mountain-goddess who is also connected with the desert and the inland regions. As such she was closely associated with the earth, nature, and wild animals. The tree flanked by caprids and sometimes flanked or standing on a lion, all symbols associated with Inanna, are well suited for Ashratum’s iconographic representation.³⁷⁵ There also seems to be an indication in the texts that the word *ashirtu* refers to both the goddess Ashratum and to some kind of cultic furniture; perhaps a sacred pole or tree.³⁷⁶ Finally, in an Amorite text, ‘Hymn to Amurru’, Ashratum is titled *be-le-e[t] shi-ma-tim*, ‘mistress of fates’, an epithet that was perhaps linked to her role as a moon-goddess and weaver/spinner.³⁷⁷

Eventually the nomadic Amorites settled and expended their territory eastward to Mesopotamia and northward to northern Syria, at which point Ashratum (Sumerian Gu-

bara) was added to the Mesopotamian pantheon and even had a temple in Babylon.³⁷⁸ Aside from being mentioned in god-lists, there is a 2nd millennium Babylonian inscription to Ashratum, from Hammurabi, which identifies the goddess as *nin-sha-la-su*, the ‘Lady with patient mercy’. Another of her epithets, *belet kuzbi u ulsi*, ‘mistress of sexual vigour and rejoicing’, is found in a text which refers to the sexual pleasure or delight, eroticism, rejoicing or happiness, and abundance which the goddess brings. Ashratum has sexual qualities commonly attributed to Inanna/Ishtar.³⁷⁹ Ashratum is also known as *kallat shar shami*, the ‘bride of the king of heaven’, and over time she seems to appear as the bride of Anu, the Mesopotamian sky-god closely corresponding to the Canaanite El.³⁸⁰ Based on the evidence discovered thus far, the name of the goddess Ashratum was last mentioned in a ritual text dating to the Seleucid period (320-141 BCE).³⁸¹

As the Amorites expended northward, they came into contact with the Hittites. With them they brought their worship of Ashratum. In a Hittite text there is a story about El-kunirsha (El-creator-of-the-earth) and Ashertu. It would seem that the goddess was beginning to be associated with El as his consort. The tale may have found its way to Hatti via Canaan/Ugarit, though it contains a typical Hittite plot style.³⁸² The narrative presents the storm-god, presumably Baal-Hadad, at odds with El-kunirsha and Ashertu. The divine couple is plotting revenge together against the storm-god for what seems to be his actions in killing the seventy-seven, even eighty-eight sons of Ashertu. Unfortunately, to date there has only been one exemplar found of this tale and it is badly damaged, so the full story is unknown. However, one more point should be mentioned about the Hittite material. Ashertu is here mentioned with a spindle in her hand, so she may also be a weaving and sowing goddess.³⁸³

The Amorite expansion westward appears to have brought the worship of Ashratum to Ugarit (Ras Shamra) and other Canaanite coastal cities, where she was known as Athirat. Ashratum would seem to have held the chief goddess position for more than three centuries before the Ugaritic period (c. 1450-1190 BCE). However, our primary source concerning this north-west Semitic goddess and her attributes comes from the Ugaritic literature, which date from the 14th century BCE, though they are copies of older texts. The rich mythic texts, pantheon lists, and sacrificial and cultic documents, preserved on numerous tablets, correlating with the iconographic material, provide ample evidence that Athirat was the most important and the highest ranking of the Canaanite goddesses. In fact, she seems to be the chief-goddess of the given pantheon where she is present.³⁸⁴ She is a *rabitu* ('lady' or 'great one'), a queen-mother, closely affiliated with, next in authority, and consort of the number-one god. Just as Ashertu is the wife of El-kunirsha in Hatti, so is Athirat the beloved of El in Canaan, and, as such, she is sometimes called Elat. Many scholars argued that, when the old Canaanite god El, who also belonged to Israel's original religious heritage, was merged with Yahweh, Asherah became the latter god's consort.³⁸⁵ Yet, wherever she is found and whatever position she had, it should be remembered that she functioned within a male-dominated pantheon.³⁸⁶

At Ugarit, she is called *qnyt ilm*, 'creatix of the gods', for Athirat was the mother of many gods referred to as *shb 'm ben 'atrt*, 'the seventy sons of Athirat', which would make her an *'um il[m]*, a 'mother of the god[s]' or mother-goddess.³⁸⁷ She is also a 'wet-nurse' to gods and princes. The latter epithet may refer to Athirat as king-maker, perhaps validating the prince as heir to the throne; a role similarly performed by Isis in Egypt and Ninhursag in Mesopotamia. The nursing imagery also presents Athirat as having an

important ideological role that elevated kings to a semi-divine status by suckling them at her breast.³⁸⁸ Therefore, she was a ‘divine guarantor of the throne’, as suggested by El’s promise to Kirta in the Ugaritic poem, saying that she will join Rachmay in suckling the royal heir.³⁸⁹ In another Ugaritic text, El invites Athirat to the *hieros gamos*, after which she proclaims Aliyan Baal king. It should not be surprising to find Athirat performing the sacred marriage, after all in Ugarit, as in Amurru, she is a goddess of the erotic.³⁹⁰ Finally, in one more Ugaritic example, after Baal’s death at the hand of Mot, El asks Athirat to proclaim another one of her sons as a substitute king to replace Baal. Athirat’s authority is noteworthy; she held sufficient power for El, the king of the gods, to take her advice in matters of succession. These numerous examples help illustrate Athirat’s key role in divine-sonship and king-making ideology.³⁹¹

Far from being exclusively a mother-goddess and king-maker, however, Athirat also appears to have functioned as a divine mediator between El and the other deities; once in the Israelite religion, it would seem that she preserved that role in connection with Yahweh. We see the goddess performing this role in the *Baal Cycle* myth, where Anat and Baal approach Athirat and plead with her. They ask that she go to El and request a palace for Baal. This role also put Athirat in the position of interceder and trusted advisor.³⁹² It is perhaps because of this aspect of the goddess as divine mediator that people also took vows to Athirat, as did king Kirta.³⁹³ Finally, there is textual evidence that Athirat also had a violent side. This warlike or combative aspect is hinted at in the Hittite material, where she plots vengeance against the storm-god. In the *Kirta Epic*, Athirat is not only petitioned by the head of the army, Kirta, for success in his war enterprise, but she is found fearful when Kirta fails in his vow to the goddess.³⁹⁴

Ugarit did not have sole claim of the goddess, for there were several Phoenician coastal cities who worshiped local manifestations of Athirat. She was known as the 'Athirat of Tyre' and the 'Elat [Goddess] of Sidon', both important Mediterranean seaports and capitals of independent states. Their prosperity depended on the good graces of the lady who ruled the bounty of the sea. Elath, another port-city far to the south, on the Gulf of Aqaba, may also have been named after her.³⁹⁵ The use of the feminine plural '*asherot*', in the biblical descriptions of Israelite worship of the goddess, may have meant that they were worshiping local manifestations of the goddess, thus there were many Asherahs with local variances.³⁹⁶

Being worshiped in coastal cities, it is not surprising that one of Athirat's Ugaritic title is *rabbat 'atiratu yammi*, 'the Lady who treads upon the Sea'³⁹⁷ (Serpent)' or 'Lady Athirat of the Sea'. This epithet has been interpreted by some scholars as referring to a lost creation type tale in which Athirat would have fought and defeated a primordial sea-dragon. Since Ashratum was not originally a sea-goddess, it has been proposed that this epithet was adjusted from *ashirtu belet seri*, 'the Lady who walks the Steppe'. In the *Baal Cycle*, Athirat is said to be sitting by the sea with her spindle at hand. Note that here still, as in the Hittite text, Athirat is associated with weaving. She also has a servant referred to as *qdsh-(w)-'amrr*, sometimes translated in English as 'Holy and Most Blessed One', perhaps the same individual as her servant *dgy*, the 'fisherman', who is commanded to cast a net into the sea in one of the texts.³⁹⁸

But it was not these nautical qualities that were important to the seafaring Phoenicians; rather, it was Athirat's celestial link that was found crucial for sailing in the darkness of night. On Canaanite gold pendants Athirat is sometimes shown standing on a

crescent moon or wears a crescent and/or crescent-and-disk headdress. The crescent represents the lunar phase of the new moon, while the disk represents the full moon. However, while the moon is a symbol of Athirat, she is not the deified moon. Nevertheless, the moon was important to the Phoenicians and it was depicted on coins and placed on standards at the stern of their ships. This symbolic representation of the goddess Athirat presented her as a guardian deity protecting these vessels. By placing the moon symbol at the stern of the ship, the pilot, who manoeuvred the steering oars, could appeal to the goddess for her protection over navigation.³⁹⁹ It is perhaps under the role of a guide at sea that Athirat's epithet, 'the Lady who treads upon the Sea', should be understood. Sailors and fishermen may have believed that Athirat trod the sea and accompanied their ships, guiding them and guarding them against the dangers at sea in order to help them have a successful voyage.⁴⁰⁰ Finally, aside from the moon governing the sea's tides, the full moon also lit the way for sailors to navigate at night, while the new moon helped sailors predict weather patterns.⁴⁰¹

Yet, whether at Ugarit, Elath, Sidon, or Tyre, even though she took on a marine aspect, Athirat did retain most of her inland symbols and attributes.⁴⁰² One of her Ugaritic epithets is *labi 't*, 'Lioness', and her children are often referred to as her 'Pride of Lions'. Because of this connection with lions, archaeological discoveries of a woman standing on a lion or flanked by lions have been identified as depicting Athirat.⁴⁰³ In the Shachar and Shalim story, there is mention of the *shd 'atrt wrchmy*, 'the field(s) of Athirat and Rachmay'. The Semitic word *shadeh* may refer to mountains or steppe/fields located in the remote areas inhabited by wild animals. These 'fields of Athirat' are almost certainly remains of Ashratum's *ina shadem*, '[She] of the Mountain' epithet.

Further, rather than a sea-creature, Athirat's chosen mode of transport is a donkey, an animal more suited for travelling across the desert, on the steppe, and over mountains.⁴⁰⁴

In light of these attributes, including those describing her as a creatrix and a nursemaid, it is clear that Athirat may have incorporated both aspects of Ashratum's fertility and sexual blessings. The Shachar and Shalim tale definitely depicts the erotic side of the goddess Athirat, though it was somewhat downplayed in most Ugaritic texts. This was perhaps a result of the presence of other goddesses, especially Astarte who has a stronger connection to sexuality in the Canaanite pantheon.⁴⁰⁵ Nonetheless, Athirat may also have promoted fertility not only in nature and the sea, but also in women, for, while Astarte was perhaps more of a goddess of sexuality, there could be no argument that Athirat was the mother of seventy sons. Therefore women seeking to be fertile in order to bear children may have favoured the goddess who had many children.⁴⁰⁶ Further, she may also have facilitated childbirth under the name Rachmay⁴⁰⁷, 'the one of the womb' ^{Fg 5} (see *shadayim waracham* 'breasts and womb' (Gen 49:25), a blessing given to Joseph by Shaddai⁴⁰⁸, which, considering the connection between Ashratum and Athirat with the word *shadem/shadeh*, may also be another name or title for Asherah in Israel ^{Fg 6}).⁴⁰⁹

There have also been several discoveries from a North-Arabian stele to numerous South-Arabian inscriptions, all dating to the middle of the 1st millennium BCE, which mentions the goddess Athirat.⁴¹⁰ In these sources, it would appear that Athirat may have taken on solar attributes, though this is still uncertain based on the evidence available. She is however paired with the Qatabanian moon-god Wadd and there was once a temple dedicated to them both perhaps as a divine couple. There is also mention of offering to Athirat and 'Amm, the national god, though he may have been the same god as Wadd.⁴¹¹

Additional inscriptions mention the taking of vows to Athirat, a continuation of the Ugaritic tradition already seen in the Kirta text. There is one occasion where there seems to be a mention of an *'trt* as a cult object without any further explanation.⁴¹² This could be a sacred pole or stylized tree similar to the *ashirtu* mentioned above, which was referred to in the Akkadian texts of Ashratum. Not much else is revealed about the role of the goddess from these scarce inscriptions, except that they seem to indicate a continuation of what was already observed as being well known attributes of Athirat and they attest to the widespread worship and longevity of the Canaanite goddess.

It would seem that it took centuries before Athirat's marine elements began to appear in her iconography, and it is under the Punic name of Tannit that we see these elements surface as symbols of Athirat. After all, the Phoenicians were the descendants of the Canaanites. Textual evidence from the 5th to the 2nd century BCE demonstrates that Tannit was Sidonian and her worship was carried from her Phoenician homeland westward to Carthage and throughout the Mediterranean.⁴¹³ Tannit, like Athirat, was similarly known as an *'m*, a 'mother' and a *rbt*, 'Great Lady'.⁴¹⁴ Cross identified the Phoenician/Punic *tnt* with Athirat, vocalizing it as *tannit*, meaning 'serpent' (*tammīn*), thus associating Athirat with serpents. Cross also interpreted Athirat's Ugaritic title 'the Lady who treads upon the Sea (Serpent)' as connected to a marine serpent, reinforcing her snake connection. Another of Athirat's epithets is *dat batni*, the 'Lady of the Serpent' or 'Serpent Lady', though it is unclear whether the serpent referred to here is connected with the earth or with the sea, or perhaps with both.⁴¹⁵

Even so, Athirat's association with serpents is also noted on a Punic devotional tablet, where the goddess bears the epithet *rbt ḥwt 'lt*, *rabbat ḥawwat 'ilat*, 'The Lady

‘Hawwa, Elat’, ‘The Lady Eve, Goddess’, or again ‘The Serpent-Lady, Elat/Goddess’. The word *‘hwt* is the equivalent to the later Aramaic *hiwa*, *hiwya*, *hewya*, the Arabic *‘haya*, all words for ‘serpent’. Finally, it is cognate with the Hebrew *‘hawa*, ‘she who makes life’, ‘life-bearer/giver’, Eve. This etymology seems to present Athirat’s epithet *‘hwt* as making a purposeful connection between the snake imagery and the root *‘hyh*, ‘life’.⁴¹⁶ A similar connection is used in a *Midrash* to present Eve as having serpent-like qualities when she tempts Adam into eating of the forbidden fruit.⁴¹⁷ Wallace thus argued that Gen 2:4b-3:24 attests to a long mythical tradition in which the personage of Eve developed as a demythologized Asherah figure through deterioration resulting from oral tradition; proof of this can be seen in the fact that both women represent fertility (‘the mother of all the living’; Gen 3:20) and they are both associated with a serpent.⁴¹⁸

Aside from serpents, Athirat’s crescent moon symbol continued to persist in her Tannit aspect. Seeing the strong connection between the moon and the sea, as mentioned above, it is only natural that this symbol was strengthened as a representation of the goddess in the Punic world. Coins continued to depict Athirat’s moon headdress on a pole standing at the stern of the boats, indicating Tannit’s importance in navigation. This moon staff motif, also known as a Carthaginian caduceus, appears to have developed as a stylization of Athirat’s sacred palm tree atop which has been placed the moon crescent.⁴¹⁹ In addition, the stylized depiction of the goddess Tannit is often shown holding or standing near the caduceus, or otherwise the crescent moon is depicted by itself over Tannit’s head. Tannit’s stylized depiction is also found either flanked by dolphins or fish, which have replaced the caprids of Athirat, or standing on a dolphin or fish, which has replaced her lion.⁴²⁰ Finally, the Phoenicians also perceived the dove and the stars of

the Pleiades as symbols of Athirat/Tannit. Obviously these stars would have been useful for orienting the sailors at night.⁴²¹ We should note, however, that this Maritime religious cult is to be understood as a subset of the general religious beliefs practiced in the Canaanite and Phoenician society. This sailor's cult, though greatly influential in the coastal cities, nonetheless addressed the needs of a specific professional group within the society and therefore should be considered a specialized religion.⁴²²

As a last note on Tannit, depictions of a clothed female figure standing in a galley and holding a cornucopia to her left and a sceptre in her right hand have been found on 3rd century CE Phoenician coins. An inscription on the coins identifies this goddess as *'lt tsr*, 'Elat of Tyre', one of Athirat's religious centres. The cornucopia symbolically represents Athirat/Tannit as a deity of fruitfulness and fertility, which is a long lasting attribute of the goddess. This attests to the longevity of Athirat.⁴²³ Indeed, recent studies have found an Aramaic papyrus in the Lebanese region, dating between the 4th and 2nd century BCE, which mentions by name the divine royal couple, El and Athirat.⁴²⁴ Further, it has been proposed that the fragments of the now lost *Phoenician History* of Philo of Byblos, probably written in the late 1st or early 2nd century CE, which was itself a translation of an original Phoenician work written by the priest Sanchuniathon of Berytus (Beirut) centuries earlier, have been preserved in the works of the 4th century CE Church father Eusebius of Ceasarea entitled *Praeparatio Evangelica*. In Eusebius' Latin translation of his selective references to Philo's Greek work, the Church father preserved the names of the equivalent Greek deities as identified by Philo rather than the original Phoenician names. Thus, rather than saying El, Eusebius refers to the god as Kronos. As for the god's two wives, Rhea and Dione, some suggest that they respectively refer to

Athirat and Elat, or, in other words, to the same goddess under her two names. The fragmented tales have been found to have many similarities to the Ugaritic texts and is a testament to the longevity of these stories and the deities named in them.⁴²⁵

There are a number of inscribed and un-inscribed Egyptian and Canaanite images of a goddess standing on a lion, and at times she is either holding a snake or is near one^{Fig 7}. Presumably, this depiction iconographically coalesces Athirat's 'Lady of the lion' (*labi't*) epithet with her Proto-Sinaitic epithet 'Lady of the serpent' (*dat batni*).⁴²⁶ The Egyptian pieces are mostly dated to around the 19th Dynasty (1320-1200 BCE). On these reliefs, a naked goddess wearing a 'Hathor-type' wig is depicted standing on a lion and holding serpents^{Fig 8}. She is identified in hieroglyphs as 'Qudshu, the beloved of Ptah', 'Lady of Heaven', and 'Qudshu, lady of the sky and mistress of all the gods'.⁴²⁷ There is also one occurrence, from amongst the many representations of Qudshu, which bears an inscription 'Qudshu-Astarte-Anat'^{Fig 9}. This led some scholars to interpret this goddess as a composite deity based on this one incident. However, this seems misleading because there is another inscription besides the three names which scholars always disregard when making this argument. Further, there are numerous texts which clearly indicate that the Egyptians understood the individuality and distinctiveness of Qudshu, Astarte, and Anat.⁴²⁸ It is possible that Qudshu (*qds*) was a constructed noun meaning 'holy', 'holiness', or 'the holy one'. Cross, Petley, and Meier have noted the parallels between '*atrt*' and *qds* in the Ugaritic corpus, and so they proposed that Athirat may be directly linked with both the Ugaritic and Egyptian *qds*, and it is even possible that Qudshu is an epithet of Athirat.⁴²⁹ This would, in turn, give us an explanation of the Ugaritic and

biblical *qedeshim* of both sexes as being perhaps Athirat/Asherah's official priesthood, possessing a title reminiscent of one of the goddess' names or titles.⁴³⁰

Aside from standing on a lion, Qudshu also holds snakes, usually in her left hand, which is a common fertility motif that has already been mentioned in connection to Athirat. With her right hand, Qudshu holds lotus plants; a suitable Egyptian substitute of the branch Athirat holds in Canaan. This iconographic link to nature is typically represented by, though not limited to, a stylized sacred tree. It is an image with strong connection to the earth and its regenerative power of fertility and nourishment, and, as mentioned above, it is an image that has been paired with the goddess Ashratum from very early on.⁴³¹ Upon her head she wears a crescent-and-disk moon crown, indicative of her continued connection with the moon. Finally, rather than being flanked by caprids, Qudshu usually has the Syrian god Resheph standing to her left side, wearing a band around his head with the head of a gazelle projecting from the band above his forehead. To her right is the Egyptian fertility- and harvest-god Min. Qudshu has strong ties to Hathor and she was similarly regarded in Egypt as a goddess of love and beauty.⁴³² Further, prayers written on Egyptian steles and dedicated to Qudshu emphasize the goddess' fertility, erotic, and sexual vigor, as well as presenting her as a goddess of welfare and of life-giving. All of these attributes have already been mentioned as attributes of Ashratum/Athirat. The fact that she is found beside the Egyptian fertility-god Min with his erect penis only reinforces this naked goddess' sexual connection.⁴³³

However, there are scholars who claim that Athirat and Qudshu have nothing to do with each other. Yamashita saw the parallel between *bn qds* (sons of Qadesh/Qudshu) and *bn 'atrt* (sons of Athirat), perhaps the strongest argument found in the Ugaritic texts

that would equate both names, though he rejected it. Either group of sons is known as the *ilm* (gods), though we do not know exactly which gods are meant or if they are the same gods.⁴³⁴ Yet, it should be remembered that Athirat is also known as the ‘creatrix of the gods’ and the mother of ‘seventy sons’, which would negate the need to determine which gods are intended.⁴³⁵ Regardless, it has been observed that some Ugaritic texts use the term *bn ’atrt* in parallel with *ilm*, while other Ugaritic texts use the epithet *bn qds* in parallel to *ilm*, though *bn ’atrt* and *bn qds* never appear in the same text. In fact, copies of these texts have been found where *’atrt* is sometimes substituted for *qds* in the other edition, demonstrating that Qadesh is another name for Athirat.⁴³⁶ Recently, however, there was a reassessment of this argument where *qds* has now been understood as referring to the god El, rather than to Athirat. If it would have referred to the goddess, it would have been written with the Ugaritic feminine singular ending *t*; *qdst*, reading *qedeshet*. Finally, though the *ilm* were most likely the sons of Athirat, they were also probably the sons of El, since Athirat and El were the divine couple and parents of these gods. Thus the terms *bn ’atrt* and *bn qds* did refer to the same *ilm* and could be used interchangeably.⁴³⁷ Yet, just as Athirat was also Elat as consort of El, she could also have been known as Qedeshet to Qadesh.

Some argued that the name *qds-(w)-’amrr* refers to the god Amurru and his consort Qadesh, or Ashratum, as she is known in cuneiform texts. But, in Ugarit, since Amurru is the servant of Athirat, Yamashita does not believe that *qds-(w)-’amrr* refers to the couple. The possibility exists that Qadesh, having a connection with the sea (perhaps via her moon symbol), was able to join the pantheon of the coastal town of Ugarit as the consort of El, whereas the desert-god Amurru was forced to take a subservient role to his

former consort. Though the juxtaposition of *qds* and *'amrr* is enticing, this argument is mere conjecture.⁴³⁸ Regardless of these linguistic reassessments and textual reinterpretation, there have been other pieces of evidence that do point to Qudshu as being the same goddess as Athirat. Meier, following Albright, further researched the textual material and brought in visual support to present a strong case for the identification of Qudshu with Athirat. Since the Egyptians clearly differentiated between Anat, Astarte, and Qudshu, it is therefore logical that Qudshu is neither Anat nor Astarte. Yet Athirat, the most important Canaanite goddess, does not appear in Egyptian texts under that name, which is extremely odd, therefore she is a prime candidate for being Qudshu. When considering both Athirat and Qudshu's connection to sexuality and fertility, their similar epithets, such as 'mistress/creatix of [all] the gods', and adding their iconographical connection to lions, snakes, crescent-and-disk moon symbol, and plant/tree motif with the naked goddess figure, the evidence quickly piles up in favour of understanding Qudshu as another name for Athirat. Dijkstra and Hadley both maintained that Meier had conclusively proven this identification.⁴³⁹

As we have seen, there is virtually a clean continuation of the role of this Syro-Palestinian goddess throughout the centuries and locations where she is found. Knowledge of Asherah would have persisted through her continued worship in local cults throughout the land of Canaan even after the arrival of the Israelites. The Israelite Asherah may have come directly from the Amorites, though Ugaritic influences most certainly marked the Hebrew goddess. It is almost certain that Ashratum's steppe and mountain attributes were more emphasized by the land-bound Israelites than the sea elements of Athirat. This connection to the earth, the steppe, and wild life is attested in

the multitude of archaeological findings which present the goddess, or her stylized tree, flanked by caprids and standing on a lion or flanked by two of them. Doubtless the early monarchic Israelites also slightly modified Athirat's characteristics to suit their own specific needs. Therefore, along with this connection to nature, there was probably a renewed emphasis on Asherah's fertility and nurturing aspects.⁴⁴⁰

Yet, at first glance, the Hebrew Bible reveals next to nothing about the nature of the goddess Asherah, a stance taken by both Frymer-Kensky and Wiggins.⁴⁴¹ From the few passages that undoubtedly refer to the goddess, as opposed to her cult object the *asherah*-pole, we can discern very little of her cult practices and her role in Israelite society. However, we know that there were prophets of Asherah (1Kgs 18:19)⁴⁴², though we know neither what their purpose was nor what they did, aside from eating at the table of queen Jezebel. We also know that the cult of Asherah made use of cultic furniture and vessels, which were kept in the Jerusalem Temple of Yahweh. These were most likely used in sacrificial offerings (2Kgs 23:4), but again we do not know what exactly was offered, during which festivals or occasion, and by whom.⁴⁴³ However, if Frevel is correct in his analysis of the second chapter of the book of Hosea, there may have been pilgrimages for merrymaking at Asherah's Sabbaths and New Moon festivals (Hos 2:11) where raisin moon-cakes were offered as sacrifices (Hos 3:1; cf. 2Sam 6:19 and the 'Queen of Heaven' in Jer 7:17-19; 44:15-19). These festivals were perhaps performed by the *qedeshim* of both sexes, if we continue to take our information from the book of Hosea (Hos 4:14; see below). The text also seems to indicate that, aside from the *asherah*-pole, there are a few occasions (1Kgs 15:13/2Chr 15:16; 2Kgs 21:7) where a

statue representing the goddess was made and placed in the Jerusalem Temple, for which garments were perhaps sown by the *qedeshot* to dress the icon (2Kgs 23:7; see below).⁴⁴⁴

Bernhardt and Wiggins have both argued that Asherah, unlike Athirat, was not a mother-goddess.⁴⁴⁵ Conversely, Day proposed that the mention of the ‘sons of God’ in the Bible (Gen 6:2, 4), probably deriving from the Ugaritic *bn ‘il* and corresponding to the ‘host of heaven’ (Job 38:7), clearly presents them as the sons of Yahweh. It would follow that these ‘sons of God’ were the offspring of a god and a goddess, as was the case in the Ugaritic literature, and here again she would have been Asherah.⁴⁴⁶ Frevel also argued that Asherah was a mother-goddess, and he turns to the second chapter of Hosea for evidence of this ‘Mother in Israel’ who had festivals and new moon ceremonies (Hos 2:11).⁴⁴⁷ The fact that Asherah is mentioned in close relation with the Judahite royalty (1Kgs 15:13/2Chr 15:16; 2Kgs 21:7, etc.), since they made the decisions whether to install or banish her symbol and/or her statue from the Temple, means that she probably played a role in the Judahite monarchy. This role would most likely have been similar to the one she performed in Ugarit; that of king-maker. Her connection with the queen-mother cannot be ignored when exploring this Judahite ideology, for which Asherah herself would have been held as the divine mother of the king of Judah (see below).

Wiggins also added that Asherah was not a fertility-goddess.⁴⁴⁸ Frymer-Kensky goes even further in saying that fertility was unimportant for the ancient Israelites and that it was taken for granted.⁴⁴⁹ But that is not necessarily accurate, for the early fragmented text found throughout Genesis 2-9 and attributed to the *J* source demonstrates a serious concern about the fertility of the earth and its ability to produce food; it was the

adam's purpose/punishment (Gen 2:5, 15, 3:17-19), Cain's life and curse (Gen 4:2, 12), and the people's hope for redemption with Noah (Gen 5:29, 8:21).

Frymer-Kensky adds that the Israelites were more concerned with procreation, citing the 'be fruitful and multiply' command found in Genesis 1:8, 9:1, 7. She then argued that procreation was under the dominion of the Israelite god Yahweh.⁴⁵⁰ However, these biblical references are attributed to the *P* source, dating to sometime between 722-609 BCE⁴⁵¹ after the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians. This source does not necessarily reflect the concerns or the religious beliefs of the early monarchic Israelites of the 10th century BCE. In the contexts of war, falling nations, and the very real threat of invasion from a large empire, the 'fruitful and multiply' command seems rather clear; there was a need for more people to help defend the country. A different message is presented in the early sources, reflecting the concerns of agriculture for a newly settled nomadic people in a new land and the birth of a kingdom, as Meyers, Naidoff, and Stordalen suggested.⁴⁵² It is in this context that we should understand Asherah in Israel. Hadley, as opposed to Frymer-Kensky, proposed a much later development of Yahweh's assimilation of Asherah's fertility and procreative powers, which was forced by the Deuteronomic school. At this point, the goddess was meant to disappear behind her cult-object, the *asherah*-pole, a phenomenon that would have happened only in the land of Israel because of late religious pressures.⁴⁵³ But as long as Asherah was perceived as part of the official cult, it would appear that she was almost certainly the consort of the Israelite god Yahweh, according to many scholars.⁴⁵⁴

Often, popular goddess worship rituals, as opposed to the official state religious practices, took place in a grotto, natural grove, or a garden. In the Hebrew Bible there are

frequent mentions of an *asherah*-pole located near altars (*mizbe-ach*) and stone pillars (*massebot*), on high places (*bamot*), and under green trees throughout the land of Israel (Dt 7:5, 12:3, 16:21; Ex 34:13; Jdg 6:25, 26, 28, 30; 1Kgs 14:23, 2Kgs 17:10, etc.).⁴⁵⁵ Accordingly, many Israelite people worshiped following the old ways by practicing their cult from mountains' heights, to grove-covered hills, to caves below, well until after the Babylonian Exile in 586 BCE.⁴⁵⁶ All of these places in Judah, where the un-carved *Asherah*-pole was to be found (1Kgs 14:23), were partly consecrated to Asherah's worship.⁴⁵⁷ Since most of the passages in the Bible seem to refer to the *asherah*-pole (out of a total of 40 mentions where the word *asherah* and its variants appear, only 7 seem to refer to the goddess by name, the other 33 times would seem to indicate her sacred pole/tree), this cult object may reveal a lot more as to the nature of this Hebrew goddess.⁴⁵⁸ Thus, when analyzing the limited textual evidence, these additional mentions would suggest that Asherah's role may have been significant in monarchic Israel.⁴⁵⁹

The *asherah*, *asherot*, or *asherim* are the terms used for the cult object in the Bible and much debate and analysis has been spent on defining these terms and their meanings and references. It would appear that the only genuine plural occurrences are in the masculine form *asherim*, and they are part of the Deuteronomistic history (c. 550 BCE), while the feminine singular *asherah* is pre-Exilic. Thus, it has been concluded that *asherim* is a code-word that refers to a cult object that is perceived as a deviation from the reformed priestly Israelite religion. In the passages where *asherim* are found, they are identified either as belonging to non-Israelite cults, or are destroyed in a cultic reform, or they are plainly condemned. It is therefore not surprising that so many references to Asherah's sacred pole (24 out of 40) are found in the Deuteronomistic

literature, which attempted to distance the goddess' symbol from Israelite worship. Indeed, the Deuteronomic school appears to be the only source which objected to the goddess and her cult object.⁴⁶⁰ Wiggins considered this masculine plural version of the word as a planned ironic masking of the goddess behind the cult object.⁴⁶¹ The occurrence of the feminine plural term *asherot*, on the other hand, is subject to grammatical problems. Its appearance in Judge 3:7 should probably be interpreted in light of Judge 2:13 and 1Samuel 7:3 and amended to *ashtarot*, referring to a pluralization of the goddess Astarte. The other two occurrences of *asherot* (2Chr 19:3, 33:3) perhaps reflect a late redacting tendency to pluralize the names of deities, such as Baal rendered *baalim*.⁴⁶²

Even with this categorization of the terms, there is no need to perceive an *asherah* any differently than the *asherim*, for both refer to the goddess' symbol. Based on the biblical passages, there seems to have been only one *asherah*-pole per altar, which means that there might have been more than one *asherah*-pole per cultic site if there was more than one altar.⁴⁶³ Though more permanent materials – gold, lapis lazuli, bronze, stone, etc. – were typically used to depict a deity, wood seems to have been essential for the making of a representation of Asherah, most likely because of her relation to the tree. Therefore, scholars believe that the texts refer to simple wooden poles. In fact, since many of the verbs used to define the *asherah*-pole indicate that it was a humanly made object. However, this *asherah*-pole may have been a conventionalized tree symbolically representing the goddess Asherah herself.⁴⁶⁴ Taylor even suggested that the *asherah* was not a pole but a living almond tree that was pruned to be shaped with seven branches, which was later replaced by the *menorah* made from a more permanent material, gold.⁴⁶⁵

There are a few instances in the Bible that describes the *asherah*-pole as carved, in which case they may have been large wooden cult statues located in temples and shrines. Following recent discoveries, detailed studies of Asherah in the Hebrew Bible concluded that the *asherah*-pole was both a cult object representing the goddess and, after being ritually ‘animated’, a manifestation of Asherah’s presence, as was the case with cult statues in other areas of the Eastern Mediterranean. Many scholars have since taken this angle in their analysis. Thus, devotees in ancient Israel would have understood and worshiped such icons as representing the powerful and potent presence of the goddess herself through her sacred tree. So the distinction between the object and the goddess would appear to be a modern phenomenon rather than an ancient one.⁴⁶⁶ As seen above with the *ashirtu* of Ashratum and the *’rt* of Athirat in Arabia, it was not uncommon in the ancient Near East that a cult object representing a deity bore the same name. For example, on an Egyptian seal the name ‘Nut’ is written above the head of the goddess and on the trunk of the tree next to her. Thus we most likely have a similar situation in the biblical passages that mention an *asherah*-pole and Asherah, for the wooden object was an image of the goddess’s powers and of herself as well.⁴⁶⁷ Though the biblical texts do not define the use of the *asherah*-pole, based on the setting in which it was placed, we may conclude that under this aspect the goddess was at least connected to trees and groves and was a symbol of the natural world and its regenerative powers of fertility, nurturing, and life giving. This appears to be a continuation of Ashratum’s powers.⁴⁶⁸

The presence of Asherah in the biblical text should come to no surprise after having traced her origins and development throughout the ancient Near East. She is presented as an active goddess with a strong character able to adapt and use her position

as the number one goddess in the pantheon to thrive. She is a mother-goddess with an erotic aspect and powers over procreation and the fertility of the land. Though she took on a marine aspect in the coastal cities of Phoenicia, her persistent roots are deep in the fruitful steppe of inland Levant.⁴⁶⁹ Based on a careful assessment of the biblical sources, it is obvious that the ancient Israelite cult did not exclude other gods and allowed for greater liberties in religious beliefs and practices than the exilic and postexilic editors of the biblical text would admit.⁴⁷⁰ In the early days of the Israelite monarchy, Asherah symbol and goddess could not be distinguished from one another, for they could be interchangeable and belonged to the same worship. Further, this goddess and her symbol appeared in close relation to Yahweh, enough to be considered his consort.⁴⁷¹

However, the efforts of some priests, prophets, and certain schools of thoughts, such as the Deuteronomic collective, would appear to finally have had some success in first eclipsing Asherah behind her cult symbol. The loss of the monarchy, the destruction of the temple, the fall of Jerusalem, and the Babylonian Exile helped in disconnecting the object from the goddess, after which it seems to have become attached, dependent, and subordinate to Yahweh, only to finally be absorbed by the god.⁴⁷² Eventually, the disappearance of the goddess did not seem to be enough, and the cult object, disassociated from Asherah had no more divine power and was just a stick, referred to as *asherim* by the Chronicler in the mid to end of the 4th century BCE, that needed to be discarded.⁴⁷³ By the time of the rabbis and the *Mishnah* (c. 200 CE), the *asherah* was only a living tree that was idolized by having been altered by human hands.⁴⁷⁴ However, the spirit of Asherah seems to have survived in the figure of Wisdom and her Tree of Life who makes happy (*ashre*), gives life, and nurtures (Prov 3:13-20; cf. 11:30; 15:4).⁴⁷⁵

b. Part of the Official Cult.

Polytheistic Yahwism was far from being, as some scholars would say, a ‘corrupt’ popular practice taking place in the countryside, though the few reforms would lead us to believe so, since the reforming kings destroyed the *asherot* outside the Temple. Around Jerusalem, in Judah, the people worshiped a number of astral deities, as well as Baal, but Asherah was not limited to the cults outside the Temple. Perhaps some of the reforming kings attempted to create a centralized worship, with one Temple, for both Yahweh and Asherah, though others clearly wanted to dethrone the goddess.⁴⁷⁶ It is very clear, as mentioned in various biblical passages, that, throughout the Israelite religious history, the cult symbol of Asherah was a standard, official, integral, and legitimate part of the cult of Yahweh in both state and popular religion. Asherah’s sacred tree stood in the Jerusalem Temple and other Yahwistic shrine in the cities of Judah (2Kgs 21:7; 23:4-7, 14). The goddess’ wooden pole was also planted in the royal cult of Samaria (1Kgs 16:33; 2Kgs 13:6), as well as on the high places of the northern kingdom of Israel (1Kgs 14:15-16; 2Kgs 23:15).⁴⁷⁷ In fact, 2Kgs 18:4 associates Asherah with an ancient Yahwistic cult symbol, the bronze serpent Nehushtan (see the following chapter).⁴⁷⁸

Asherah was largely suppressed from biblical references, except for her sacred tree or pole cult objects.⁴⁷⁹ In the Bible, the word *elah*, orthographically the feminine form of *’el*, occurs 17 times. Though it could be translated as ‘goddess’ without damage to the text, it is almost always rendered as ‘oak’ or ‘terebinth’, that is, a living tree. Even if *elah* may be a living tree, some scholars concluded that it was the same as the wooden *asherah* object, thus identifying Elah as another epithet of Asherah ^{Fg 10}. Similarly the

Ugaritic word *'elat*, the feminine form of *'el*, can generally mean 'goddess', as well as another name, title, or epithet of Athirat as counterpart to the god El.⁴⁸⁰ Further, the word *asherah* appears 40 times in nine of the books of the Hebrew Bible, most references deriving from the Deuteronomist source. The intriguing lack of vehement opposition against Asherah by other Israelite literary sources opposed to the worship of Baal further suggests that they did not consider the *asherah* illegitimate or non-Yahwistic, as did the later anti-Baal Deuteronomist group. Thus, scholars generally recognize that the textual evidence suggests that none opposed the worship of Asherah in the north and the south, or even in the state Temple in Jerusalem, from the arrival of the Israelite tribes in Canaan through to the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BCE. However, Olyan does propose that the Deuteronomistic historian may have began their religious reform in the 8th century, probably following the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to the Assyrians, when they started their objection to Asherah, though her cult and her association with Yahweh lasted until the fall of the Judahite monarchy.⁴⁸¹

Coogan considered biblical religion as a subset of Israelite religion, which, in turn, was a subset of Canaanite religion. Naturally, many in the Israelite population might have believed that Asherah's cult was a perfectly legitimate part of Israelite religion. Olyan argued that Asherah might have been worshiped side-by-side with Yahweh in the official Jerusalem cult of Judah^{Fg 11}. Thus, it was not until later, when the Deuteronomistic circles of authors and redactors, who were advocates of an exclusively monotheistic Yahwism, strengthened the zeal of the previous reforming kings – Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah – which were only intermittent exceptions at their time. These reforms gradually increased in intensity and frequency through the prophetic demand for the

worship of Yahweh as the one and only god.⁴⁸² The Deuteronomistic historians reduced the goddess to her cult-object and successfully labeled her cult as a foreign element that was illicitly introduced and corrupted the Israelite religion. They accomplished their work so well that many scholars today still difficulties in fathoming, let alone reconstructing the Israelite polytheistic religious ancestry within the context of Canaan. On the contrary, when carefully analyzed in its environment, the biblical evidence presents Asherah as fully being an Israelite phenomenon.⁴⁸³

The Hebrew Bible clearly portrays Baal as being in obvious competition with Yahweh. This gave rise to some degree of syncretism in certain aspects of the Israelite religion and rituals. Religious purists probably considered this syncretism to be corrupting the official cult. As a result, it is possible that the worship of Yahweh and Asherah became too similar to the fertility rites of Baal and Astarte. This might have given rise to an anti-Asherah Deuteronomic reform, which led to the textual pairing of her cult symbol, the *asherah*, with Baal and his cult. Hence, as suggested by Yamashita and followed by Olyan, in an attempt at discrediting her from Yahweh's cult, Asherah was equated with Baal's consort, Astarte. So the polemic against Asherah became necessary. However, the Deuteronomists had limited knowledge of the religious practices of early monarchic Israelites and offered a biased description of polytheistic Yahwism. Olyan insisted that Asherah was definitely not Baal's consort, since she was not mentioned alongside the god in 'anti-Baal' texts. Rather, it was Yahweh's cult that was under criticism when Asherah was disapproved of.⁴⁸⁴ Further, the Ugaritic and Hittite texts clearly present tension between Baal and Athirat, if not outright detestation on the part of Ashertu towards the storm-god, for the simple fact that he slew her sons.⁴⁸⁵

The Hebrew Bible and extra-biblical inscriptions bear witness that Asherah's relationship with Yahweh was not one that was only limited to co-habitation in the Jerusalem Temple. For all intent and purposes she was Yahweh's consort, at least for a few centuries. They were worshiped alongside each other officially in the state religion and also on a popular and private level. Even the early prophets did not object to their joint cult. Any god and goddess closely connected as they were would be understood as a couple without any major discussion, regardless of the Bible's ambiguity on the subject.⁴⁸⁶ Thus, though some still debate the issue, an increasing number of scholars now accept that the cult of Yahweh and the cult of Asherah are to be understood as paired in monarchic Israelite worship, rather than associating Asherah with the cult of Baal.⁴⁸⁷

The terse biblical references enable us to reconstruct the possible history of Asherah's worship in Israel. There is little doubt that the Hebrew tribal populace worshiped her for at least three centuries before the monarchic period, for her statues stood in many local sanctuaries (Jdg 3:5-7).⁴⁸⁸ In Gideon's early days (12th century BCE), the worship of Asherah was a communal or public affair. The goddess' wooden image belonged to the town's chieftain, Joash the Abiezrite, Gideon's father, who was also a priest of Asherah. Gideon, one of the earliest Yahwist zealots, demolished Baal's altar and cut down the *asherah*, incurring the wrath of the entire town of Ofra. The men of the city demanded his immediate death, but he was saved because his father stood by him (Jdg 6:25-32).⁴⁸⁹ Later, Solomon is said to have introduced Asherah into Jerusalem for his Sidonian wife, as part of the royal household cult. However, the historian calls her 'Ashtoreth [Astarte], Goddess of the Sidonians' (1Kgs 11:5, 33; 2Kgs 23:13). Yet, the Ugaritic texts identify Asherah as 'the Goddess of Sidon'.⁴⁹⁰ Though there might

have been some confusion between the goddesses, this phenomenon does not seem to have happened until much later, perhaps as a result of the Deuteronomist who appears to have purposely associated Asherah polemically with Astarte in an attempt to reform the Israelite religion. As far as the early extra-biblical texts are concerned, the goddesses were understood as quite distinct by the time of the early Israelite monarchy.

Regardless of the ambiguity of this 'Sidonian Goddess', the worship of Asherah definitely took place in the Jerusalem Temple under king Rehoboam (928-911 BCE), son of Solomon, because of his favourite wife Ma'acah.⁴⁹¹ Many modern commentators have suggested that Ma'acah introduced the foreign Canaanite Asherah cult into the Jerusalem cult because she herself was of foreign ancestry. However, though the other Ma'acah appearing in the Hebrew Bible was the daughter of king Talmi of Geshur, she was the grandmother of this Ma'acah through her husband David and her son Absalom. Thus, Ma'acah II is the paternal cousin of king Rehoboam.⁴⁹² And so, it is logical that, if a member of the royal family erected a cult statue⁴⁹³, it would be placed in the Jerusalem Temple, first, because of the Temple's proximity to the palace, and second, because the Temple essentially functioned as the private chapel⁴⁹⁴ for the monarch. Thus, Ma'acah used her influence to introduce an image devoted to Asherah, which importantly was not an anomaly, and placed it in Yahweh's Temple in Jerusalem, and she also brought in the priestly class of *qedeshim* (1Kgs 15:13, 24; 2Chr 15:16). This image of Asherah may have been a cultic object, though most scholars now argue that it was a much more elaborate depiction of the goddess, in other words, it was a statue of Asherah. While the Asherah-pole may have been an acceptable symbol to introduce in the Temple as part of the Israelite aniconic tradition, the statue would have been too explicit.⁴⁹⁵ However, it

should be noted that the Hebrew Bible reports that *asherot*, *massebot*, and *qedeshim* already overran the land of Judah before Rehoboam and Ma'acah rule from Jerusalem (1Kgs 14:22-24). So it is entirely possible that the *asherah*-pole already stood in the Temple, since Ma'acah did not introduce an *asherah* but rather made a statue of Asherah.

Ma'acah had several sons with Rehoboam, and Abijah/Abijam, her eldest, was chosen as heir and appointed chief over his older half-brothers. Ma'acah's position gave her the power to make her son king. After Abijam succeeded Rehoboam, she assumed the position of *gevirah*, queen-mother (see chapter below), and remained equally strong (1Kgs 14:31-15:2, 15:13; 2Chr 11:20, 22). During Abijam's reign (911-908 BCE), Asherah's image stayed in the Temple.⁴⁹⁶ Asherah's presence in Yahweh's Temple may have ended 35 years later by Solomon's great-grandson and Abijam's successor, Asa (908-867 BCE).⁴⁹⁷ Under the influence of the prophet Azariah, son of Oded, Asa instituted the first religious reform in the history of the Judean kingdom (2Chr 15:10). In the 15th year of his reign, Asa removed and destroyed Asherah's cult statue at the Temple, though there is no mention of the *asherah*-pole being removed. He also ended Ma'acah's dominance as *gevirah* in 893 BCE (1Kgs 15:12-13; 2Chr 15:16), but he did not remove the 'pagan' altars, *massebot*, *gillulim* (idols), or *asherot* from the high places in Judah (1Kgs 15:14; 2Chr 15:17).⁴⁹⁸

When examining some of the texts related to Asa's son and heir, Jehoshaphat (870-846 BCE), it appears that he followed his father's religious policy. Since the high places, *bamot*, and their cultus were not all taken away during Asa's reign (1Kgs 22:44), suggesting that Asa's reform was not as successful as the Chronicler first claimed (2Chr 14:3, 5), Jehoshaphat completed the reform by ejecting the class of religious leaders

known as *qedeshim* (1Kgs 22:46-47) and removing all the *asherot* from the countryside (2Chr 17:6), but again, no mention of the removal of the *asherah* from the Temple. Nonetheless, for his zeal, the seer Jehu, son of Hanani, praised him (2Chr 19:3). However, certain archaeological and biblical data suggest that their opinion was not normative in Judah.⁴⁹⁹ Things were tumultuous after Jehoshaphat's death, and little is known of the Temple's religious state, although, when considering that Athalia, the daughter of Jezebel, reigned during this time, anything is possible. About 10 years after Jehoshaphat's death, Joash (836-798 BCE) ascended to the throne of Judah when he was seven years old. Influenced by the priest Jehoiada, he 'did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh' and began to restore the Temple (2Kgs 11:21-12:4f.; 2Chr 24:1-2, 4f.).⁵⁰⁰ By all indications, if there was an official suspension of Asherah worship, it would have been during Joash's early reign, which was under the influence of the high-priest Jehoiada, and it would have been short-lived. After all, Jehoiada took charge of the Temple when Joash was seven (2Kgs 11:18; 2Chr 23:18). Following Jehoiada's death, Joash gave in to the demands of the princes of Judah. The goddess' cult symbol sprang up again and if it was removed from the Jerusalem Temple it most likely was set up once more, leading the people back to the worship of Asherah (2Chr 24:2, 18).⁵⁰¹

The *asherah* remained there for at least 100 years, until the 8th century BCE, if not since the Temple's construction. Hezekiah (727-698 BCE), perhaps pressured by the activities of the two great Yahwist prophets, Isaiah and Micah, or politically motivated as some scholars argued, removed the *asherah* and Nehushtan, the bronze serpent 'that Moses had made', from Yahweh's Temple. As part of his reform, he also abolished local shrines and high places that had proliferated in the countryside (2Kgs 18:4; 2Chr 24:2,

17-18, 31:1).⁵⁰² Whether or not Moses' experience on Sinai led him to make the bronze serpent, throughout the Near East the serpent was so much a part of the goddess culture that it was still integral to the old religion in the eyes of the people, and therefore Nehushtan might have become associated with Asherah from early on.⁵⁰³ The biblical text explicitly reports that, as soon as Hezekiah died, the local altars and high places reappeared. His son and heir, Manasseh (698-642 BCE), reverted to the old religious customs by not only erecting a third *asherah* in the Temple, after a 27 year absence, but he also seems to have made an anthropomorphic statue of Asherah, similar to what Ma'acah made, and placed it in the Temple (2Kgs 21:3-7; 2Chr 33:3-7, 15, 19).⁵⁰⁴ It is notable that, of all the items removed by his father, the *asherah* was the only object Manasseh restored to her traditional place in the Temple.⁵⁰⁵

Stimulated by the *Book of Deuteronomy*'s discovery in the 8th year of his reign (2Kgs 34:3, 8-20; 2Chr 34:8, 14-28), Josiah (639-609 BCE), under Deuteronomic influence, began another zealous Yahwist religious reform around 620 BCE that destroyed the altars set up by Rehoboam 300 years before. He also abolished the *asherah* (object and statue?) and the vessels made for her sacrificial cult from the Jerusalem Temple (2Kgs 23:4, 6, 15).⁵⁰⁶ Josiah then destroyed 'the houses of the *qedeshim* in the Temple of Yahweh', where the women (*qedeshot*?) wove 'garments' perhaps to clothe the goddess Asherah's cult statue introduced by Manasseh (2Kgs 23:4-7). It would also be fitting that the goddess' religious experts would be skilled in a work that she herself was known to possess (see above for Asherah as spinner/weaver).⁵⁰⁷ It was also this reform that saw the beginning of the Deuteronomic movement to eclipse Asherah behind her cult object and their attempt to pair her with Baal, as mentioned above. Local altars,

now labelled 'Canaanite', were destroyed (Ex 34:13; Dt 7:5), while a commandment was written forbidding the erection of a *massebah* and the planting of an *asherah* next to an altar (Dt 16:21).⁵⁰⁸ Though Josiah carried out these commandments faithfully during the remaining 11 years of his life and reign, not even the most thorough and zealous Yahwist reform was able to eradicate Asherah's tenacious worship. She was brought back into the Temple 11 years later, upon Josiah's death (609 BCE), and her worship sprang up again all over the countryside. There she remained until the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar 23 years later (586 BCE). During those years, Jeremiah prophesied against idolatry in general, and particularly against Asherah worship (Jer 17:2).⁵⁰⁹

So if we reconstruct Asherah's presence in the Temple, which may have begun before Rehoboam's reign, her cult symbol remained there for at least 35 years (928-893 BCE) until Asa's reform, if not longer. For at most 68 years (893-825 BCE), to the beginning of Joash's reign, there may not have been an *asherah* in the Temple, depending on the Athalia period and Jehoiada's influence, though the text is somewhat silent. For certain, the statue of Asherah was removed during Asa's reign. Nevertheless, if the cult object was ever removed, Joash would have restored it, and there it remained for the next 100 years (825-725 BCE), if not from the Temple's construction. Then Hezekiah's reform lasted 27 years (725-698 BCE), when Asherah's worship was officially forbidden. Manasseh ascended to the throne and restored the mother-goddess to the Temple, sacred tree and statue, where she stayed for 78 years (698-621 BCE). Josiah's reform followed, which lasted only 11 years (620-609 BCE). After his death, his son Jehoahaz restored the *asherah* into the Temple, where it remained until it was destroyed 23 years later (609-586 BCE).⁵¹⁰ At the very least, the Jebusite-inspired syncretism⁵¹¹ officially prevailed at the

Solomonic Temple, and of the 370 years of its life, an *asherah* stood in it for no fewer than 236 years and possibly up to 304 years, that is about two-thirds to over three-quarter of its existence.⁵¹² This means that Asherah's worship was certainly a legitimate part of Yahweh's official cult in the state Temple of Jerusalem, approved of and led by the king, the court, and the priesthood.⁵¹³ Only a few prophetic voices opposed her, at relatively long intervals spanning from perhaps the 9th to the 7th centuries BCE, if not limited to the 7th century BCE, which prompted the reforms of perhaps Asa-Jehoshaphat, and definitely those of Hezekiah and Josiah. Though the Deuteronomic group perceived the action of these few kings as proof of a cultic purge, there was no 'reform' per se; rather, what took place was more an attempt at a new beginning. As for the biblical textual tradition, the theologians of Yahwism, in their late formulations of the Hebrew Bible, attempted to purge or downplay the many original references to the goddess Asherah, in order to maintain, revive, or create the faith in a covenant god. As a result, the goddess Asherah was all but forgotten by rabbinical times.⁵¹⁴

Further, there are two passages from the *Book of Jeremiah* (Jer 7:17-19; 44:15-19) which provide us with a rare glimpse into the Judahite popular ritual practices throughout the land of Judah, on the streets of Jerusalem, and its continuation during the exile in Egypt. People worshiped 'the Queen of Heaven', along with other gods, and claimed that their ancestors, kings, officials in Jerusalem, and 'the people of the land' throughout Israel performed these rituals (Jer 44:17, 21). Women seem to have led their whole families in making offerings, pouring libations, building fires, and baking 'cakes for the Queen of Heaven' (Jer 7:18-19). The women even made vows⁵¹⁵ to honour the 'Queen of Heaven' as Kirta did with Athirat (Jer 44:17). These people refused to listen to

Jeremiah's warning of disaster, if they persisted in these practices, and vowed to go on sacrificing to the goddess (Jer 44:15-17). There are numerous theories by scholars as to who was the 'Queen of Heaven'. She could be Anat, Astarte, Asherah, or even a new goddess who incorporated two or all three of them, but considering the text's claim that kings and queens of Judah worshiped her, this goddess seems to be none other than Asherah.⁵¹⁶ Ezekiel may also have attacked a ceremony involving an *asherah*, associated with ophidian worship (Ez 8:10) and the rites of the solar cult (Ez 8:16-18), which were still performed in the Temple at the beginning of the 6th century BCE (Ez 8:7-13; cf. 16:17).⁵¹⁷ On the other hand, Hosea (c 750 BCE) never engaged explicitly in polemic against a female deity and might possibly have made a few implicit allusions to a goddess who may be Asherah, and to her festivals (Hos 2:11, 4:17-18 14:8-9).⁵¹⁸ There were a few prophets, mostly dating around the exilic period and supporting the official or elite state religion, who condemned the worshipers who carried out services to Asherah, New Moons, and the Sabbaths. Perhaps these worshipers sought an oracle from the moon and approached the altar and sacred tree covered with fruits (2Kgs 23:4-7; Hos 2:11). Some scholars have suggested that Asherah may have been involved in divination based on biblical (Micah 5:11-14) and extra-biblical texts.⁵¹⁹

Archaeology is forcing us to revise our basic notion of what ancient Israelite religion was, especially when it comes to the popular religion of the common people, which typically overlaps with the official state religion.⁵²⁰ We now know that the worship of the ancient goddess Asherah actually reflected a popular and an official religious practice throughout the Monarchy. Thus, when Asherah was accepted into the Temple, *asherot* were set up next to altars on hilltops throughout Israel and Judah, and,

we may suppose, homes had individual modes to worship the goddess.⁵²¹ Biblical scholars generally now agree that it was not until the Exile and beyond that true monotheism, and not merely henotheism, the worship of a supreme god over many gods, arose to become a standard in both official and popular religion.⁵²²

Most scholars also concurred that the northern kingdom of Israel owned the site of Kuntillet 'Ajrud located in the Negev area. It has variously been interpreted as the site of a religious centre, a fortress-like structure, or even a trading post. Regardless of its function, a diversity of people seem to have used the location.⁵²³ Several large store-jars have been found with painted motifs and scenes dated to c. 775 BCE. On one jar, there is an image of the familiar 'tree of life' flanked by ibexes and standing on a lion ^{Fig 12}. On the other side there are two representations of what has been argued to be the Egyptian good-luck-god Bes ^{Fig 13}. To their left, there is a half-nude female figure playing a lyre, distinctively seated on a lion-throne, suggesting that she is a goddess. A Hebrew blessing-formula is inscribed on this store-jar, which ends with "May X be blessed by Yahweh of Samaria and by his Asherah".⁵²⁴ The antecedent is understood as Yahweh, thus rendering the phrase either as "Yahweh and his *asherah* [cult object]" or "Asherah [goddess]".⁵²⁵ Though the pronoun is usually translated as 'his', it could also be 'its' and could refer to Samaria; thus it would be a local manifestation of Asherah at Samaria, and we know that Ahab set up an image of Asherah (1Kgs 16:32-33) sometime during his reign (873-852), where she was worshiped in the royal court of Israel's capital (2Kgs 13:6) until the fall of the northern kingdom (722 BCE).⁵²⁶ Whatever the specific translation of the pottery jar inscription, the text contains a blessing formula ending with 'by his/its *asherah*/Asherah', which appears as a common and acceptable expression of

Judeo-Israelite Yahwism throughout much of the Monarchy.⁵²⁷ Other Hebrew inscriptions were also found through the land of Israel, which, at times, mention Yahweh alongside Asherah, El, or even Baal.⁵²⁸

Throughout Palestine, archaeologists have excavated, from various contexts, 2000 or more intriguing small naked female terra-cotta cultic statuettes, dating from 2000 to 600 BCE, though their function and significance are not easily interpreted. They reveal that Israelites and Judahites, like their neighbours, used figurines to represent their deities. Though not all of these icons were depictions of Asherah, certainly some were representations of this goddess. In light of these artefacts, it would be a grave mistake to not take the visual material into consideration when analyzing a culture's religious practice.⁵²⁹ The most famous of these figurines, found all over Judah and native to that land, are the pillar figures, first appearing in the 8th century BCE, which possibly depicts Asherah's tree symbolism ^{Fg 14}. Most scholars understand these typical Judean figurines as belonging to the vigorous popular worship, which is part of the growing awareness that pure and widespread monotheistic Yahwism, without graven images, developed relatively late in Israelite history. It is even more surprising that so many of them (450 out of 822 was the exact calculation at the time this was written) were found only a short distance from the Jerusalem Temple Mount. They were perhaps votive images, linked to goddess worship, bought at the Temple, blessed by a religious leader, maybe even by a *qedeshah*, and brought back home as a protective deity. Considering that many major cult centres had workshops, these figurines could certainly have been produced as souvenirs, charms, and/or as 'prayers' in clay.⁵³⁰ Women may have used these tiny female statuettes, especially the 'chaste' pillar figurines whose portrayals may indicate

that Asherah was now strictly associated with the 'mother' concept, to appeal or pray to the goddess for help in childbirth, nursing/lactating, and/or in granting plentiness and fertility. Their size and design may indicate that they were meant to be held, perhaps during childbirth rituals. There is even a variation of these pinched face pillar icons that is depicted carrying a childlike pack on her back. Asherah seems to have become a benefactor of mothers, making William F. Albright's *dea nutrix* a suitable designation.⁵³¹

The cultic role of the mother-goddess in ancient Israel's popular religion has been neglected, misunderstood, and downplayed by the majority of biblical scholars. This is partly due to the elitist male institution and most of their students' bias on the subject, who, not accidentally, agreed with the biblical writers' biases. However, this trend has started to change over the last few decades because of contributions from feminist scholars.⁵³² At this time we can now conclude that coupling the father-god with a well established mother-goddess would only have been natural in face of the popular fertility cults; thus the cult of Asherah became connected with the cult of Yahweh very early on in the Israelite cultus. This is particularly true when understanding Yahwism as having developed from, and being a continuation of the religious context of the Syro-Palestinian area. Asherah had her own functions, which was an extension of those she held in Amurru, Ugarit/Phoenicia, and elsewhere. She was appealed in prayer texts and invoked in apotropaic texts, all in order to secure the welfare of her devotees. Unlike partisan biblical texts, archaeological finds are valuable witnesses to this phenomenon. Thus, as hard as the prophets and others fought to promote pure monotheism, the goddess Asherah functioned as Yahweh's divine consort in biblical times, and was part of the 'official' monarchic religion, perhaps even through to the Second Temple era.⁵³³

c. Nehushtan.

Before Hezekiah's reform, there is no record of this Brazen Serpent to which 'the Israelites made offerings'. Originally, Num 21:5-7 recounted that this wonder-working cult-object was set up on a pole (*nes*) in the desert as a healing-god. However, to the old 'serpents in the wilderness' story was added, by a later source, an obvious etiological story in defence of Nehushtan (Num 21:8-9). It was linked to Moses, as this sacred symbol's maker, for validation⁵³⁴ in an attempt to legitimize and explain its presence in the Temple, thus ascribing the art of healing to Yahweh (Ex 15:26; 23:25).⁵³⁵ Nehushtan was certainly created before the Ark, for the Ark validated Jerusalem as David's capital by associating it with Yahwism; thus there would have been no need for a modern creation with the Ark already in the city.⁵³⁶ Neither would there be a purpose for Solomon, or one of the early kings, to transfer the 'Moses made' Serpent to Jerusalem, in order to add popularity to the shrine and centralize the national religion, and, for certain, it was not brought at the same time as the Ark, if it was brought at all.⁵³⁷ Its transference to Jerusalem would have been public and formal, and a written record of the occasion would have been kept, unless, as Kennett supposed, Nehushtan was Moses' rod, used in the deliverance from Egypt, and it was kept inside the Ark. So, had this Brazen cultic symbol indeed been a genuine 'Yahweh' relic from the Mosaic age, or the Canaan Settlement, it would likely have been venerated in a sanctuary where the Ark did not stand to rival it. Robertson Smith did not connect Nehushtan with Moses or the Levites, but saw it as a Davidic totem symbol. Thus David had a personal motive for its creation

or transference to Jerusalem that did not need a public occasion or permanent records of the event, and it would not interfere with any other shrines.⁵³⁸

Nehushtan, like the bulls in the northern kingdom, came to be regarded as a Yahweh symbol by the time of its destruction, though, originally, it probably was a non-Yahwistic symbol of Canaanite origin, depicting a god that predated the Hebrew settlement of Palestine and Jerusalem.⁵³⁹ Thus, Rowley argued that an omphalos⁵⁴⁰ myth was already alive among the Jebusites, who probably worshiped Nehushtan in Jerusalem before David and his men captured the Canaanite stronghold city. Naturally, there would be no narrative account of its transfer to the Temple with the Ark.⁵⁴¹ Ample evidence confirms that serpent worship was ancient and widespread in Palestine, where it was associated with healing, as the story of Nehushtan's creation attests (Num 21:8-10).⁵⁴² Further, the healing function of the serpent, with its restoration of life related to the giving of life, probably entailed an association with fertility rites, a practice that persisted a long time.⁵⁴³ This is just one of a number of features found in common between the Eastern Mediterranean cultures, like Jerusalem, Delphi, and at other shrines from the early Creto-Minoan times down to the Ophite sects in pre-Christian Gnosticism. They all claimed an omphalos (earth-navel station), which included snake-worship, chthonian rites (involving an earth mother-goddess), oracles, and a solar cult.⁵⁴⁴

Beltz even proposed that, when the Israelites wandered the desert, after the Exodus, they came upon Kadesh, which might have had a sanctuary dedicated to Asherah (Qadesh) with priestesses in attendance. Moses and the Levites would have taken over the oracular function at Kadesh, just as the priests of Apollo took over the same function at Delphi. Mythically, Yahweh and his priests, like Apollo who killed the Python,

usurped the goddess Gaea's place, and took over the Pythia priestess, would have superseded the goddess of Kadesh. In order to placate the enraged goddess, who sent her serpents to cause ill to her sanctuary's violators, Moses erected her bronze image, which cured those who looked upon it. Evidently, this myth predates the prohibition of graven images amongst the Hebrews and the worship of one god.⁵⁴⁵ Not surprising, the Bronze Serpent had a place in the sacrificial cult of the Jerusalem Temple, inside which it stood for about 200 years alongside an image of the mother-goddess Asherah, until Hezekiah's reforms. This suggests that both ancient Yahwistic cult images were devoted to Asherah (2Kgs 18:3-4).⁵⁴⁶ Representations depicting Asherah, in conjunction with serpents, have been commonly found in archaeological excavations at Ugarit, Bethshan, Hazor, possibly at Beit Mirsim, and at many other places of Syria-Palestine and Israel.⁵⁴⁷

Therefore, Nehushtan was probably the principal sacred cultic object housed in the pre-Davidic Jebusite shrine, kept by the Jebusite priest Zadok, until the Ark was brought in to be beside it. Nehushtan's function was probably, in some way, related to an ophidian ritual, which, in turn, points to the worship of the earthbound aspect of the goddess, because of the snake's connection with the earth and the underworld.⁵⁴⁸ There is little doubt that, after the Settlement, syncretism, like the placing of a Yahwist symbol beside a Jebusite symbol in a single shrine in Jerusalem, perhaps dictated by political wisdom, fused the Israelite and Canaanite religious traditions throughout the land and facilitated the fusion of the people into a community.⁵⁴⁹ Nehushtan would therefore have been present in the Jebusite temple of Jerusalem, as part of the El-Elyon (base on Gen 14:18-20) and Asherah worship, under the priestly-king Zadok, before the Hebrews entered the land. When David took Jerusalem, made it his capital, and kept Zadok, the

chief idol remained there and was probably adopted by, and limited to, the Judahites, while Yahweh syncretized with El-Elyon and became the consort of Asherah. Her snake was preserved and so was her tree. The allurements of its worship and the proofs of its divinity proved too strong for later Yahweh-worshippers who sought healing, and they would probably have participated in its worship, although it was not originally part of Yahwism. Thus it became to them also a god of healing.⁵⁵⁰

II. Religious Experts.

a. Kingship.

Some writers, appealing to Near Eastern parallels, spoke of the Israelite king's divine character. In some cases Near Eastern kings were divinized, and sometimes we see a divine kingship. Central to Egypt's political and religious ideal was that a god-king ruled the country. Clearly, the Pharaoh was more than considered a god; he was plainly called 'the god' or 'the good god'. Royal titles, religious literature, rites of coronation, and artistic depiction all express the Pharaoh's divine attributes and 'more than human' stature. The Egyptians believed that every king was born of the union between the chief state-god, typically the creator-god Ra, and the ruling king's principal queen, a tradition that was probably established as early as the Archaic Period (c. 3100-2890 BCE). Because of the heir's unique origin, born of a divine father and a human mother, he was endowed with special qualities enabling him to be king, mediate between gods and men, and perform the rituals for the gods in the temples. This tradition continued onto the Old

Kingdom period (c. 2686-2181 BCE), where the concept of god-king became clearly defined. During the Middle Kingdom (c. 1991-1786 BCE), the old sun-god Ra was replaced by the younger sun-god Horus, son of Osiris and Isis. During his lifetime, the king was believed to be the earthly embodiment of the royal hawk-god Horus. After his death, succession passed to his son through the king's principal queen (Great Royal Wife), and the title was handed down to his successor, while he became assimilated with Osiris. The role of the Great Royal Wife was very important in the royal succession, for she was the daughter of the previous king and through her was traced the royal blood line. When the Egyptian capital was moved to Thebes, during the New Kingdom (c. 1567-1089 BCE), the Theban local god Amun was merged with the creator-god Ra to become the chief god of the state. The king's principal wife became known as the Divine Wife of Amun, a title that passed from one principal queen to another until it became a priestly title separated from the queen (see above). However, this period also saw the high-priest of Amun beginning to have a role in royal succession, while the king gained control over the Theban priesthood through his daughter the Divine Wife of Amun. Yet, across these various eras there is one constant; Pharaoh is identified with the sun-god.⁵⁵¹

The Mesopotamian kings sought divine approval from early on, and it was acknowledged that they had a divine character, though they did not all necessarily regard themselves as gods. As in Egypt, the Mesopotamian kings also used grand epithets, such as 'god's son'. Some of the Sumerian kings started adopting the *dingir* prefix, identifying the king as a god. However, this became far less apparent over time with the Babylonians and Assyrians. Other means to suggest divinity were also used, artistic devices, such as being portrayed standing in a god's presence or being depicted taller

than the people around him. Despite the divine-sonship status and certain supernatural powers, for instance having a radiant aura, the king, unlike Pharaoh, still remained a man among men.⁵⁵² The Hittite king was also a man during his lifetime, but he was deified after his death. The Palestine and Syrian evidence available on the topic is limited, and we cannot conclude that these kings were deified.⁵⁵³ However, Hendel documented that, in the royal iconography of Canaan, the king was sometimes described as the 'image' or 'statue' of the chief-god.⁵⁵⁴ Though it is not true that all the people of the ancient Near East shared the idea of a divine king, making it hard to construct a strong argument for its existence in Israel, there are certainly arguments pointing to its possible existence.⁵⁵⁵

Drawing on basic descriptions of the 'myth and ritual' school, while prudently ignoring this school's more controversial conclusions, Cross built on Alt's work and argued that one of the features that distinguished the southern kingdom was its notion of sacral kingship not found in the northern Israelite monarchy. Though the southern king cannot be described as a god, nor considered divine, it is nevertheless true that the Davidic kings were thought to have a filial relationship with Yahweh, the divine father.⁵⁵⁶ In describing this relationship, the Bible uses an adoption formula, as spoken by Yahweh, which affirms the divine-sonship of the king.⁵⁵⁷ Cross believed that the pertinent texts, such as the psalmists who made Yahweh declare, "You are my son; today I have fathered you" (Ps 2:7), and "I will name him my first-born, highest among the kings of the earth" (Ps 89:28), were composed in Jerusalem. The king is also recorded as echoing these words (Pss 89f; 45:6; 110:1-7; 2Sam 7:14a; Isa 9:5).⁵⁵⁸ This divine-sonship adoption ideology became linked to the typology of the house of David with the house of Yahweh. Together they expressed the 'high theology' of the Jerusalem royal

court and stood as a substitute for the covenantal formula.⁵⁵⁹ The anointing rite clearly shows that, upon assuming office, the king was adopted by Yahweh and became regarded as his metaphorical son. In turn, Yahweh became the king's divine father. This gave the king a special relationship with the god, a sacrosanct status in society, and other privileges without necessarily implying that he was deified.⁵⁶⁰

In each of the adoption texts, immediately following the sonship or 'birth of the royal son of Yahweh' formula, there is the specific emphasis that nothing a king does can bring an end to the royal house of David⁵⁶¹; the father-son relationship was perpetual, permanent, and unconditional, in other words 'eternal'. The covenant relationship, on the other hand, was explicitly conditional in time and scope, following certain stipulations.⁵⁶² The data suggest that the eternal dynastic decree material probably emerged in the change between the old Canaanite and the new Judahite cultures. It can be no earlier and not much later than Solomon's establishment of the imperial court and his building of the Temple. At that time, the Yahwists created a combined version that used the patriarchal covenant league theology (Gen 15) and merged it with the divine royal adoption archetype (2Sam 7; Ps 89:20-38). While the first survived in its original form in northern Israel, after the kingdom's division, the eternal decree tradition was preserved in the imperial court of Judah, for the Davidic Dynasty and the sanctuary of Zion, because of David, Yahweh's servant.⁵⁶³ Just as it was crucial for the early Mesopotamian kings to validate their right to rule by linking themselves to the divine, so was it for the Judahite kings in the early monarchic days.⁵⁶⁴

Naturally, the king held office as Yahweh's agent or vice-regent where he had a special responsibility for the well-being of his people.⁵⁶⁵ Throughout the Davidic

Dynasty's 400 years, from David's transfer of the Ark to Jerusalem until Josiah's reform, the king superintended the organization of worship in all its forms.⁵⁶⁶ As well, the Judahite king, like the kings of Egypt, Assyria, and Phoenicia, once sanctified by his anointing, was a sacred person⁵⁶⁷ endowed to perform religious priestly functions. Indeed, the king led his people in national worship on a number of important occasions. His right to officiate at the altar⁵⁶⁸, which he exerted at times, created a royal priesthood in Israel. In fact, the king is called a 'priest' in a royal psalm (Ps 110). Further, references of the king's performing of sacrifices are not rare. For example, after David bought the threshing-floor of the Jebusite Araunah, the future site of Solomon's Temple, he offered sacrifices (2Sam 24:18-25; 1Chr 21:18-22:1). David is even mentioned as blessing the people in the sanctuary (2Sam 6; 1Kgs 8:14; 1Chr 13, 15, 16; 2Chr 6:3), a rite later reserved for the priests (Num 6:22-27; 1Chr 23:13).⁵⁶⁹ Similarly, when the Temple was dedicated, Solomon not only blessed the assembled worshipers standing before the altar (1Kgs 8:54), but he also offered a prayer for both the Dynasty and the nation (1Kgs 8:22; 2Chr 6:12).⁵⁷⁰ Finally, David obviously filled a cultic role when he escorted the Ark in a procession to his royal city, wearing a linen *ephod*⁵⁷¹, 'loincloth', like an officiating priest (2Sam 6:14). He danced wildly before the Ark as it was borne along.⁵⁷² Historical books from pre-exilic sources and prophets make no protest against the king's intrusions into liturgical worship. Near the end of the monarchy, however, it was a very different story. For example, Uzziah is said to have been struck with leprosy when he usurped a privilege of the sons of Aaron by burning incense at the altar.⁵⁷³

Mowinckel argued that the king incarnated the national god, through whom the divine blessing flowed to the people. Accordingly, Yahweh renewed his covenant with

the Israelites and the House of David through their representative, the reigning king, and bestowed upon them all the blessings of fertility, including rain for the year that lay ahead.⁵⁷⁴ Ahlstrom similarly suggested that there was a Jerusalemite renewal of life ritual that involved the king, as the earthly representative of the fertility-god, i.e., Yahweh, during which he suffered, died, and rose again.⁵⁷⁵ The evidence, for interpreting Yahweh as a dying and rising-god, is supported by the annual mourning customs for the death of the god, traces of which may be found in such passages as Jdg 21:19-21, Hos 6:3, the entire book of *Joel*, and the *Song*.⁵⁷⁶ Wijngaards suggested that 'dying and raising' is similar to 'turn' or 'repent', which was a way to describe a covenantal change of loyalties or a voiding and renewal. Thus, elevation/enthronement from dust, and abasement again into dust, is cyclical, for it can be reversed and one can be 'resurrected' from the dust again to a situation of stability and 'glory' (Lam 3:18). According to this theory, the 'dust' imagery reflected, in origin, the Davidic royal theology, and its pattern being obviously linked to the dying-god tradition, though at this period it became interpreted as messianic (Pss 119:1; 2:7; 2Sam 7).⁵⁷⁷

According to recent studies, the covenant-making motif (1Sam 2:8b) is connected to the creation of the *adam*⁵⁷⁸ formula (Gen 2:7), and both intersect with enthronement and resurrection, all being pieces of the sacred marriage rite.⁵⁷⁹ As von Rad pointed out, the theme that begins and ends the Eden narrative is *adam/adamah*. We note that the *adam* began life in the regular world, east of the garden of Eden, where he was one with the rest of the *adamah*, the dust of the ground. Yahweh formed the *adam* from the *adamah* (Gen 2:7), which can be metaphorically understood had Yahweh selecting one individual from the many. Following this the *adam* was brought to the garden/temple for

deification/coronation (Gen 2:8). Once elevated in status, he was returned to his earthly home to end his life, where he was meant to ‘till the ground from which he was taken’ (Gen 3:23), in other words, rule over his kind, the *adamah*, which allegorically refers to the population. The narrative is obviously circular in form; the *adam* was not created in the garden, and he was never meant to remain in it, though there is an expectation of return.⁵⁸⁰ Thus, the Eden story seems like a royal enthronement ritual, where the *adam* is being crowned king over the garden; so it should be examined as a king-making tale.⁵⁸¹ Also, in light of Wijngaards’ observations, the ‘from the dust’ formula, proposed by Brueggemann, can be understood as cyclical – life/death/rebirth – in which both the enthronement and dynastic covenants were renewed.⁵⁸²

Finally, May proposed that symbolic names were given to the offspring of the Hebrew New Year sacred marriage rite, which reflected their status. For example, Solomon was originally named Jedidiah, ‘friend/beloved of Yahweh’ (2Sam 12:25). Similarly, considering the sexual significance of his name⁵⁸³, Isaac may have received his name as a result of this fertility-cult origin.⁵⁸⁴ Samuel’s name is certainly not explained by the popular etymology ascribed to it. In the biblical tale, Hannah names her son Samuel because she ‘asked Yahweh for him’ (1Sam 1:20), thus Samuel means ‘God hears’ because he heard Hannah’s prayer for a child. However, Samuel actually means ‘[his] name is God’, which may point to the boy’s divinity. As mentioned before, the ending ‘*el*’ may indicate divine status.⁵⁸⁵ Further, his parents, Hannah and Elkanah, may have taken part in the divine marriage rites. This becomes especially evident when considering the shrine practice descriptions of the annual pilgrimage to Shiloh for the great autumnal (Asif) festival (1Sam 1:3-7, 9-12, 17-20). It is further interesting to take

into account the *Septuagint*'s preservation of the text, which describes how Hannah went into the temple room, after being blessed by the high-priest Eli, and joined her husband to drink and eat of the sacrificial meat and spend the night (LXX 1Kgs 1:18).⁵⁸⁶

b. Ladyship.

The etymology of the word *gevirah* stems from the verb *gvr*, meaning 'to conquer, dominate, be powerful, be superior', indicating 'strength, power, divine power'. It is used to refer to the sun's power/strength (Jdg 5:31). The variant word *gevor* belongs to the divine-kingly sphere, and the noun *gvr*, 'man', also means 'tyrant, ruler' (Isa 22:17), 'prince' or 'king' (2Sam 23:1; Jer 22:30; Zech 13:7 (=shepherd); Hab 2:5; cf. Ps 18:26, 52:9, 88:49), 'brave man' (Job 38:3 and 40:7), and 'oppressor' (Prov 28:3). And finally, the feminine form of *gevir*, 'ruler' (Gen 27:29, 37), is *gevirah*.⁵⁸⁷ Thus, in certain contexts the usage of the term *gevirah/gevirot* suggests a translation that may mean 'mistress', as opposed to maidservant, especially when describing Sarah's relationship with Hagar (Gen 16:4, 8, 9). This translation can also be used elsewhere (2Kgs 5:3; Ps 123:2; Prov 30:23; Isa 24:2; 47:5, 7). However, when referring to Pharaoh's wife, it should be translated 'queen' (1Kgs 11:19). In the rest of the Bible, the most common and frequently applied denotation of the term appears to identify the mother or wife of the reigning sovereign, thus meaning 'queen-mother' (1Kgs 15:13; 2Kgs 10:13; 2Chr 15:16; Jer 13:18; 29:2; cf. 'the king's mother' in 2Kgs 24:15). All of these variant translations imply a certain dignity and special powers associated with the title, corresponding to '*adon*', 'lord', the feminine of which is not used in Hebrew.⁵⁸⁸ Wiggins considered the

gevirah as a *rabit*, a titled shared with Asherah, *rbt*, ‘the great one’ or ‘the Lady’; so *gevirah* could also be rendered as Great Lady.⁵⁸⁹

The status of queen-mother, *gevirah*, from the ancient kingdom of Judah, must have been important. Most of the names of queen-mothers, with the exception the mothers of Asa⁵⁹⁰, Joram, and Ahaz, have been preserved in the introduction of the formulaic notice that begins the description of each king’s reign in the official Judean royal archives (1Kgs 14:21; 15:2, 10; etc.).⁵⁹¹ The standard pattern for the kings who reigned before the fall of Samaria, including Hezekiah, reads, ‘In the XX year of king PN of Israel, PN began to rule over Judah. He reigned for XX years in Jerusalem; his mother’s name was PN, daughter of PN’.⁵⁹² After the fall of Samaria, and following Hezekiah’s reform, the basic pattern remains, obviously without the synchronization with the king of Israel, though the town where the mother’s father lived is added (2Kgs 21:1, 9; 22:1; 23:31, 36; 24:8, 18).⁵⁹³ Evidence suggests that the Great Lady did not exist in the northern kingdom. This may be because the Hebrew Bible was mostly written by Judahites, therefore making it a Judahite text. The rank might still have existed in the northern kingdom of Israel, though it may have had a different word (*shegal*?⁵⁹⁴). The name of the king’s mother is never given in the introductions to the reigns of Israel. The only *gevirah* mentioned in Israel seems to have been Jezebel (2Kgs 10:13), the queen-mother of kings Ahaziah (853-852 BCE) and Jehoram (852-844 BCE) of Israel. However, the text reports the title as being spoken by the princes of Judah who have come to visit the north. No native northerners are recorded speaking the word. Yet, it should moreover be remembered that Jezebel was also the queen-mother of one of the rulers of Judah, Athalia (2Kgs 11:3), and Jezebel even had the prophets of Asherah in her

household (1Kgs 18:19). Nevertheless, the institution seems to presuppose a dynastic stability not usually found in the Israelite kingdom.⁵⁹⁵

The Great Lady exerted more power than merely having influence over her son. While some scholars viewed the *gevirah* as a survivor of a possible matriarchal period, others, like Andreasen, argued, based on the text of 1-2Sam & 1-2Kgs, that she was the second-most powerful figure in the royal court, holding an official institutionalized political station within the court of Judah, semi-independent and superseded only by her son the king, though her position was often equal to his.⁵⁹⁶ In fact, the king is described as bowing to her (1Kgs 2:19). She crowned him on his wedding day (Song 3:11) and she herself wore a crown (Jer 13:18). She sat at his right hand (1Kgs 2:19) and even received audience (1Kgs 2:13f).⁵⁹⁷ This allowed her to keep her position after her husband's and even her son's death.⁵⁹⁸ Ackerman agreed with Andreasen that the Judahite queen-mother had an official position within the palace, and they both agreed with Ben-Barak that she functioned as the king's chief counsellor, and could be described as 'lady counsellor', with guidance being sought especially in regards to the royal succession, judicial matters, and mediations between political factions (1Kgs 2:13-25).⁵⁹⁹ We should note here that at Ugarit, the goddess Athirat also performed these functions; she was a mediator and counsellor to the king of the gods and she was consulted in matters of succession (see above). Yet, some scholars doubt that the *gevirah* held an 'office', especially since there was only one at the time. Rather, they speak of an institution confined entirely to Judah.⁶⁰⁰ On the other hand, for abusing of her powers, the *gevirah* could be deposed by the king, suggesting that it was an office with possible religious ties. This may be why Asa's wife and daughter-in-law are not known, because they never

became *gevirot*; Asa may have outlawed the office after dismissing his grandmother. Thus, being the king's mother does not necessarily make one a *gevirah*, though only a queen-mother could be a *gevirah*.⁶⁰¹ Other scholars believed that neighbouring kingdoms, such as the Hittite *tawananna* and the Ugaritic *rabitū*, influenced the creation of this office (see above).⁶⁰² She certainly had a function aside from holding an honorary position at court as the head of the 'female household' (or harem). The queen-mother's authority explains how Athalia easily seized power when her son Ahaziah died. She held the kingship for six years for her infant grandson (2Kgs 11:1f.). The mother may possibly have been accorded the rank of *gevirah*, either when her son was designated heir or when he ascended to the throne.⁶⁰³

Andreasen and Ben-Barak argued that, despite the Hittite queen-mother's cultic function in her court life duties, when Israel borrowed this office, the official religious role of the *gevirah* was eliminated.⁶⁰⁴ However, others, like Molin, have argued that, when considering the status of the Asherah cult in Israel, combined with the Egyptian, Hittite, Syro-Phoenician, and Mesopotamian parallels, the *gevirah* had both state and cultic functions in ancient Judah, the latter being her primary role. The *gevirah*'s cultic and ideological role may have entered the Israelite religion in Judah via Jerusalem and the Jebusites, periodically influencing the northern kingdom as well.⁶⁰⁵ Ahlstrom further proposed that the queen-mother's cultic responsibility began when she was the consort of the king, with whom she took part in the *hieros gamos* ceremony by embodying the goddess bride, *ha almah* 'young woman' (Isa 7:14), which, I assume, led her to becoming the mother of the future king.⁶⁰⁶ Currently, however, there are a few historians of religion who endorse the existence of a sacred marriage in Israel, though none agree with

Ahlstrom's contention that the *gevirah* played the ritual role of the consort, because they believe it would have entailed mother-son incest. Unfortunately, he seems to have been misread, for he meant that the *gevirah* was the queen, the king's wife.⁶⁰⁷

Biblical texts do link a Judahite queen-mother with cultic activity and the worship of Asherah (1Kgs 15:2, 9-13; 2Chr 11:20-22; 15:16). She is Ma'acah (or 'the Ma'acah', maybe an Aegean (Philistine) title⁶⁰⁸), a Davidic princess, daughter of Absalom⁶⁰⁹, wife of Rehoboam, and mother of king Abijam/Abiyam (in Kings), alternatively called Abijah/Abiyah (in Chronicles), who ruled in Jerusalem (915-913 BCE). Ma'acah next served as *gevirah* for her grandson Asa (1Kgs, 15:10, 13; 2Chr 15:16).⁶¹⁰ Since he had a 41-year reign (913-873 BCE), Morgenstern and other scholars supposed that he probably assumed the throne at an early age, as Josephus recorded (Ant 8:11:3), making it possible that Ma'acah served as 'queen-regent' before Asa reached maturity.⁶¹¹ The data imply that Ma'acah's ability to retain the position of *gevirah* during both Abiyam/Abiyah and his son Asa's reign, and consecutively exercise political power, indicates that she commanded an authoritative position independent of the king in the royal court. She even supplanted Asa's actual mother, who is not mentioned in the biblical text; the latter may have died in childbirth, or perhaps some other illness brought about an untimely demise, or Asa may have abolished the *gevirah* institution altogether.⁶¹²

Through his 'reform', Asa reversed Rehoboam's so-called 'pro-Canaanite' religious policies by destroying idols, expelling *qedeshim* from the shrines, and probably opposed the *hieros gamos*⁶¹³. However, because we lack information, it is hard to discern what was meant by 'reform'. There was an attempt, by the late biblical writers, to present the Israelite religion as polluted and 'Canaanized' by the increasing syncretism

of the age, though, in origin, these elements were part of the traditional religion, while the reform may have tried to establish Yahwism as the sole practice. This opposition to idols (*gillim*) and syncretism was probably due to a power struggle, in which the Jerusalemite Yahwist priesthood influenced and pressured the king, in hopes to get rid of the priests of local sanctuaries or 'high places'. Note that Asa's Davidic forefathers observed the customs of the land, enriching it with various images and idols, and none are exempted from the general accusation.⁶¹⁴ Asa also became angry at Ma'acah, because she asserted her authority religiously when she erected a *mipletset la'asherah*⁶¹⁵, 'an abominable image for Asherah' (1Kgs 15:13), which she placed in Yahweh's Temple in Jerusalem⁶¹⁶. The objection here may have been to the 'image of Asherah' rather than to the *asherah*-pole, which remained on hill-tops throughout Judah.⁶¹⁷ The early 9th century Davidic Dynasty queen-mother would traditionally have been expected to take care of the Heavenly Queen-Mother, as Frevel argued.⁶¹⁸ But, clearly not seeing Ma'acah's action as religiously appropriate, Asa attempted to counteract certain religious phenomena by cutting down and burning the cult statue of the goddess (but there is no mention of the *asherah*-pole that was probably present in the Temple before Ma'acah introduced her statue). He also removed his grandmother Ma'acah from the office of *gevurah* (1Kgs 15:13; 2Chr 15:16). He seems to have perceived her practices as causing too much syncretism (perhaps because she made an anthropomorphic icon that went against the aniconic Israelite law?), a view apparently shared by his son Jehoshaphat. Perhaps Asa also declared a reform to assert his independence from Ma'acah's extensive political and cultic influence. Regardless, he became one of the few kings to be declared pious, 'like his ancestor David' (1Kgs 15:11, 14), by the late 7th century Deuteronomist authors.⁶¹⁹

Though biblical writers tend to present a homogenous picture of the Israelite religion, which we have come to doubt, it is to no surprise that they depicted the queen-mother's devotion to Asherah in a derogatory fashion.⁶²⁰ However, the relevant data suggest that the *gevirah* had an accepted and official responsibility within the king's court, integral to the Judahite monarchical religion, especially as it was construed in the royal ideology of the southern kingdom. It was perhaps the queen-mother's primary cultic obligation to show devotion and allegiance to the cult of her divine alter-ego, the mother-goddess Asherah (1Kgs 15:13).⁶²¹ The *gevirah*'s primary role as priestess and presider in the official cult, however, did not exceed her other obligations, comparing perhaps to the king's cultic functions vis-à-vis Yahweh (2Sam 15:12; 1Kgs 3:4; 8:5, 62-64; 12:32 etc), though it cannot be divorced from her socio-political functions.⁶²² So her cultic functions, undertaken on behalf of Asherah, stood in close relationship to her political responsibilities within the political affairs of her son's court. In fact, one reason the queen-mother could fulfill this official role of royal adviser, or counsellor, in her son's palace, may stem from the belief that she was the human representative of Asherah within the monarchy. This gave her power and authority that, like the king's, originated in the world of the divine. This divine legitimization, embodying the real power behind the throne, allowed the queen-mother to function as the second most powerful figure in Israelite society.⁶²³ Further, such validation would also explain why, if the king was weak, too young, or even absent, the queen-mother could act as the king's regent and become the head and patron of the royal state cult and the kingdom, a role dependent on the kingdom's particular politico-religious relationship (2Kgs 11:3).⁶²⁴

In addition, through isolated analysis of certain queen-mothers, such as Bathsheba (2Sam 11:3), Ma'acah (1Kgs 15:2), Hamutal (2Kgs 23:31), and Nehushta (2Kgs 24:8), we find two common characteristics: (1) Each of these queens defied the generally accepted legitimization practice of the firstborn, or oldest surviving son's ascension claim, by promoting as heir to the throne a younger son who was without royal succession rights.⁶²⁵ (2) They each succeeded in recruiting a great following of ambitious supporters who helped make it possible to place a younger son at the head of the kingdom.⁶²⁶ Examining these queen-mothers gives us an insight on how, by force of their personality and command, they were able to obtain a position of power and influence in the kingdom. It seems as if these ambitious and strong women were prepared to use every available means in order to place the royal crown on their son's head. They achieved this with extreme success, and, aware of their mother's great power, the sons, in gratitude and continued dependence, granted them significant authority in the realm.⁶²⁷ Since, most of the details we have about the *gevivot*'s activities are from these four queen-mothers; it appears that they similarly attained exceptionally influential positions through personal drive and political connections. Hence, though they arose to great heights, they would not define all the *gevivot* in the history of Judah and the ancient Near East. Still, we may speculate, without going beyond the evidence, that they attained this role in the kingdom because of their status.⁶²⁸

To be able to have her son, who was not the king's oldest, become king was not an essential factor in the role of a *gevirah*; otherwise, only the queens who succeeded in this task would have received this title. Thus, perhaps what made a *gevirah* was the fact that she had the power to make her son king, regardless of his rank as first or last.

Similarly, the reason why the *gevivot* had power was that they already had established power as *gevivot*, and not because their sons gave them this power. So the only reason their sons became kings was that the *gevivot* had enough power to put them there in the first place. It is certainly possible that, because their sons became rulers, they gained more power and were able to preserve that power through to the reign of another king. Further, the text makes no mention of queens quarrelling amongst themselves⁶²⁹ to have their son become king after the death of the old king. Thus, it seems that the future *geviraḥ*, like the future king, was already designated before the old king died and was confirmed when her son became king. In fact, we can understand from the text that both the future *geviraḥ* and the future king were determined at the son's birth (2Sam 12:24-25; 2Chr 11:20-22). So it could be that a king's wife may have originally obtained her designation of *geviraḥ* through a sacred marriage ritual that resulted in the conception and birth of the crown prince. This would have been the moment that designated which *qedeshah*/queen was to become the future *geviraḥ*/queen-mother, for the son conceived through this sacred ritual was to become the future king, which differentiated him from the other sons born, on not so special days, to the other queens in the ruling king's harem.

Many commentators have suggested that the queen-mother's prominence in the southern royal courts was perhaps explainable through the differing kingship ideologies found in Judah, with its divine-sonship motif, holding Yahweh as the adopted father of the king, which was not found in Israel.⁶³⁰ Giving for example the wife of Jehoiakim and mother of Jehoiachin (2Kgs 24:8), Nehushta, whose name may indicate a connection with the Jerusalem serpent worship (Nehushtan), Terrien proposed that the Jerusalem Temple was the *omphalos mundi*, where serpent worship and chthonian divination was part of a

solar cult. These were regulated by a constellation of religious experts that included *qedeshim* and *qedeshot*, but, above all, it included the queen-mother who had a key religious socio-political responsibility in ancient Judahite succession ideology.⁶³¹ If we accept that Asherah was, in both the state and popular cult, the consort of Yahweh, as seems to be the case from the evidence presented above, it is thus possible that, in the southern monarchy's adoption language of divine-sonship, just as Yahweh, the god, was metaphorically the king's surrogate father, so Asherah, the goddess, may have been the monarch's surrogate mother. This is certainly within Asherah/Athirat's wet-nurse and king-maker roles as seen in the evidence from Ugarit.⁶³² Thus, all of this cultic personnel played a mystical role in the sacramental aspect of the monarchic succession.⁶³³ Because she incarnated the goddess on earth, there was an intimate connection between the queen and the goddess. Just as the goddess gives birth to the divine child and acquired the title of 'mother-goddess', 'mother of the gods', and *qnyt ilm* (creatix of the gods), so the *qedeshah*/queen, after the future king's birth, the fruit of the *hieros gamos*, she was designated the king's favourite wife, the *gevirah* to be, and upon her son's enthronement, was confirmed 'queen-mother', the *gevirah*.⁶³⁴

The queen-mother's position, as the human mother of the king, placed on a throne at the right hand of the king (1Kgs 2:19), was an earthly ideological replica of the mother of the god in the congregation of the gods, and, as such, the Judean *gevirah* would have been perceived as the human representative of the mother-goddess Asherah, the king's divine mother.⁶³⁵ So upon the old king's death, the queen-mother-to-be's fundamental role, in this transition of power, as living proof of the future king's authenticity, physically linking him to his father and forefathers, included the naming of the heir to the

throne. She naturally had the authority and right to determine succession matters. Speaking as the goddess, and thus as the god's consort, the woman about to become *gevirah* was uniquely qualified to attest to her son's divine adoption by legitimizing the king's claim to be the adopted son of Yahweh.⁶³⁶ In other words, the sacred marriage ends in sacred birth, which, as seen above, seems to have been one of the original purposes of the ritual.⁶³⁷ It has been suggested that it is because of this probable connection between the *gevirah* and the goddess Asherah that the worship of Asherah seems to have completely disappear after the fall of the Judahite monarchy. With the Babylonian Exile came the elimination of kingship, so there were no more kings, thus no royal ideology; similarly the queen-mothers ceased to be, and so there were no more representatives of the goddess in Judah to preserve the worship of Asherah.⁶³⁸

c. Zadokites.

Zadok suddenly appears after the conquest of Jerusalem in the story of Absalom's rebellion when he accompanies David in bearing the Ark (2Sam 15:24). Since he is associated with the sanctuary, he is one of the two high priests mentioned in the account of David's life, the other being Abiathar (1Sam 22:20).⁶³⁹ In the oldest sources, he is without genealogy, though two different genealogies are given in later texts; one contains textual corruption and the other is a pious fabrication.⁶⁴⁰ A full genealogy is also provided in 1Chr 5:30-34, 6:35-38 (E.V. 6:4-8, 50-53), going back to Aaron. Yet, there is no reference to his exercising priestly or other functions outside Jerusalem (except in the definitely unhistorical 1Chr 16:39). Thus he may have belonged to the city of

Jerusalem.⁶⁴¹ Mowinckel and Bentzen proposed that Zadok's name corresponds to Adoni-Zedek (Josh 10:1-27) and especially to Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20). These ancient names are connected with Jerusalem, further suggesting that Zadok was the priest-king of the Jebusite sanctuary in the city-state of Salem. We know that a single individual served both roles of priest and king among the Canaanites and Phoenicians. So Zadok was the heir and descendent of Melchizedek.⁶⁴² The only other reference to Melchizedek in the Bible is found in Ps 110:4. The author of this Psalm presented the pre-Israelite Jebusite priesthood of Jerusalem as having achieved legendary fame and possessing eternal validity, and so Zadok's house inherited this tradition and practice from the pre-Davidic shrine of El-Elyon (1Sam 2:35; cf. Num 25:13).⁶⁴³ This was validated early on for Israel, either during David's reign, when Zadok was named one of the royal priests, or after Abiathar's dismissal, early in Solomon's reign.⁶⁴⁴

Whether Gen 14 has historical value or not, the chapter states that there was an ancient shrine in Jerusalem and there is no reason to doubt that fact. The Canaanite god who was worshiped in Jerusalem⁶⁴⁵ was not Baal, but El-Elyon, one of the forms of El under which the Patriarchs worshiped Yahweh, thus facilitating the change.⁶⁴⁶ There is also evidence that Zedek was a Semitic deity, further suggesting that Zadok was a pre-Davidic Jebusite.⁶⁴⁷ David may not have destroyed the old sanctuary when he captured the city of Jerusalem; thus it is not impossible that it was reutilized to store the Ark. In order to win over those Jebusites who remained in the town, David also retained the priests who served that shrine. There are several stories, which are generally held to be etiological, giving examples of the way in which the early Israelite patriarchs took over Canaanite sanctuaries to legitimize later Israelite worship at these shrines.⁶⁴⁸ The story

recounting the meeting between Abram and Melchizedek (Gen 14:18-20) was not written as an etiology to legitimize the Jebusite shrine. Abram is not mentioned as visiting the shrine presided over by Melchizedek, but rather the tale was composed to protect the validation of the Jebusite priesthood and to prove the shrine's ancient origin.⁶⁴⁹

Zadok may also be identified with Araunah, from whom David bought the threshing floor to build an altar (2Sam 24:18-25), which eventually became the site of the Jerusalem Temple. Actually, the term Araunah may not be a personal name, but rather was originally a Hurrian title that was also used in other Near Eastern languages. It means 'the Lord' and is perhaps similar in concept to the Egyptian title 'Pharaoh'. In one confusing instance he is called 'Araunah the king'. The passage would literally read: "All this Araunah the king gives to the king [David]." (2Sam 24:23). This puzzled most scholars who emended the Masoretic Text by removing the words 'the king' that follows 'Araunah', though the passage is acceptable as it stands.⁶⁵⁰ David permitted the defeated king Zadok to continue in his influential function as high priest in his own capital of Jerusalem. Similarly, David did leave kings to rule over other 'provinces' of Israel as vassals (2Sam 8:2, cf. 2Kgs 3:4-27). Still, by keeping Zadok in his role of priest, and portraying him as David's friend, David might have found it easier to gain the support of the Jebusite population still living in Jerusalem.⁶⁵¹

David, sanctified by Yahweh's renewed covenant, could hold the position of priest-king: "You are a priest for ever, in the succession of Melchizedek" (Ps 110:4). This suggests that David took Zadok's place as priest-king in the Jebusite succession line. The psalmist may have exaggerated, since David never filled the office of high-priest (a term that originated much later), therefore leaving the principal priesthood to Zadok and

Abiathar jointly, though David, as a sacred person, occasionally did performed priestly acts.⁶⁵² A similar situation existed in Egypt, where the pharaoh did not conduct all the rituals. The king's depiction, shown performing a ritual role in temple wall scenes, preserved the fiction that he alone carried out every rite. In reality, the king could not personally attend to all the state and religious duties, so that they were largely delegated to senior officials, functionaries, and priests. They acted as his representative, entered the sanctuary each morning, and carried out all the rituals. However, the pharaoh continued to perform the Daily Temple Ritual in the chief-god's main temple, and he attended the dedication ceremony of each temple built during his reign.⁶⁵³ Finally, at the beginning of Solomon's reign, the new king deposed the priest Abiathar, stripping him and his descendents of the title of priest, and exiled him from Jerusalem. Solomon then installed Zadok as the sole chief priest where there were two before. Zadok and his descendents were to be the priests and high-priests at the Temple of Jerusalem (1Kgs 2:26-27, 35).

d. Priestesses.

i. Qedeshot.

In the Bible, the rank, title, and profession of *qedesh(ah)* comes from the root *qds* which literally means 'sacred', 'set apart', 'holy', or 'consecrated one'.⁶⁵⁴ According to Westenholz, the Greek translators struggled with it, as is evident from their various translations and non-translations, and rendered the word in two ways: (male and female) 'prostitute' (πορνῆ, πορνεύων) or 'initiate' (based on τελεω, 'to finish', 'to bring to

perfection’, and ‘to initiate into the mysteries’), perhaps giving rise to the common mistranslation of ‘sacred prostitute’.⁶⁵⁵ Most biblical scholars think the masculine plural term *qedeshim* is generic and can refer to both men and women who were dedicated to the deity, though the specifically feminine plural *qedeshot* is also used.⁶⁵⁶

Successive periodical reforms, imposed by Israelite kings influenced by prophets and religious zealots (1Kgs 14:24; 15:12; 22:47), prohibited the existence of the *qedeshim* and the *qedeshot* (Dt 23:18). The *qedeshot* were there in king Rehoboam’s days (1Kgs 12:24), but were deposed by king Asa (1Kgs 15:11) and his son, Jehoshaphat (1Kgs 22:47). They returned and were part of the Temple personnel for a while, until Josiah got rid of them 200 years later, at which time the *qedeshot* were weaving vestments for Asherah inside the *qedeshim*’s quarters within the Temple of Yahweh (2Kgs 23:7). The *qedeshot* also offered sacrifice with priests, for which they were condemned (Hos 4:7, 9, 13-14). Meanwhile, in some Ugaritic texts, the *qedesh* is sometimes equated with the *kohen* (priest). In Job, the word came to refer to the lives of the impious (Job 36:14).⁶⁵⁷ The emerging biblical monotheistic tradition, or Deuteronomic school, identified the *qedeshot* as a rejected foreign or Canaanite class of religious leaders that practiced improper cultic functions. Nonetheless, they must have played a large role in the cult for a long time, since the normative cultus preserved a record of their existence. As such they must have performed functions within the official cult, before being marginalized, and in the popular cult.⁶⁵⁸ However, from the contexts presented in these biblical passages just mentioned, we know virtually nothing further on a *qedesh/qedeshah*’s functions. What is more, there is certainly no explicit evidence leading to the conclusion that they engaged in illicit sexual activities with which they

were later labelled.⁶⁵⁹ Still, many scholars are tempted to specifically call the women and their practices as improper ‘Canaanite’ cult worship, identifying them as irreligious ‘sacred prostitutes’ based on the theory that the term *qedeshah* is a synonym of *zōnah*, while some *qedeshim*, though not all, are branded sodomites or simple male prostitutes. In reality, it is contrary to reason to separate the male and female religious experts who bore this title, whether at local Canaanite sanctuaries or within the Israelite religion, and consider one ‘holy’ and the other ‘profane’.⁶⁶⁰

It has been remarked by Assante that cult prostitution did not exist in the Bible or Mesopotamia before Frazer. The *qedeshot* were known as simple prostitutes; it is Frazer who added the ‘sacred’ to this term. Though a step in the right direction, this translation seems to have created a fictional profession. For over a century of scholarship, which began in the 19th century and was heavily influenced by the Victorian perception of women, many academics have put forth arguments ‘proving’ that sacred prostitution had existed. However, it would appear that they built this theory one upon another, giving it authority by sheer repetition. To go through the amount of work published on the topic here would be tedious.⁶⁶¹ However, most scholars did not seem to distinguish between ritual sex and prostitution. Considering the ancient Near East’s cultic activities focusing on the fertility and prosperity of the land, a *qedeshah* might have performed ritual sex, in the form of the sacred marriage, that produced an offering for the temple in the form of a ‘dowry’, but it would have been an act of worship, which is a very distinct function from prostitution.⁶⁶² I am exploring the possibility of a sexual aspect to the *qedeshot*, not only because of the overwhelming amount of work done on the topic, but also because, specifically speaking, the Hebrew Bible and other sources do offer some hints. By

remaining close to the available source material, we can see that the use of sexual innuendos suggest that female sexuality was a significant aspect of a *qedeshah*'s role, and perhaps a high status *qedeshah* could have performed ritual sex. After all, the Bible itself does seem to purposely equate the *qedeshah* with the *zōnah* (prostitute; see below), sometimes using the two terms almost interchangeably (Dt 23:17-18; Hos 4:13-14; cf. Gen 38), which leads one to wonder if a *qedeshah* may have had some sexual role.⁶⁶³

It should be well established by now that, if there was an actual sexual aspect to the *qedeshah*'s role, it would not have been the wide-scale debauchery depicted by the biblical prophets and other polemical writers.⁶⁶⁴ Clearly, the symbolic union of the divine and human realms, or sacred marriage rite, was performed in the temple. The occasional respectable private act of ritual sexual union needed cult functionaries of both sexes (a priestess and a priest/king), and a divine couple. The goddess would have been worshiped through her living representative, the priestess or *qedeshah*, in the cultic sexual activity of *hierogamy*. The ritual would not have existed outside the cult, so it was not ritual prostitution between a priestess and a stranger, a distinction many scholars did not make.⁶⁶⁵ It would have been performed on specific seasonal holy days, like the New Year's festival, or in times of plague, drought, or famine. However, the misconception of 'sacred prostitutes' derived perhaps from a misunderstanding of *hierogamy*.⁶⁶⁶ As an 'imitative magic' rite, its "purpose was to ensure fruitfulness in nature, the coming of the autumn rains, the growth of the crops, the multiplication of domestic animals, etc."⁶⁶⁷ These practices, not of sacred prostitution but of ritual sex, persisted for as long as the cults themselves lasted, until later biblical writers, like those of the Deuteronomic literature, misunderstood the entire Near Eastern influenced Israelite religious system,

and claimed that it had a corrupt and false moral standard. They may also have perceived the *qedeshot* as diverting power away from the Levitical priesthood.⁶⁶⁸ Like the Mesopotamian *qadishtu*, the *qedeshah* probably held high social status. Some *qadishtu* among the Hittites, Luwians, Hurrians, and Semitic Amorites, were from aristocratic families.⁶⁶⁹ It is probable that Judah's queens were also *qedeshot* (see *lukur* above).⁶⁷⁰

The *qedeshah*'s exact functions remain unclear, though she was associated with the service of the sanctuary (Gen 38:21-22; Dt 23:17; Hos 4:14). She is also mentioned as taking vows, perhaps to Asherah (Dt 23:17-18).⁶⁷¹ Recent discoveries sent historians to review ancient texts and archaeological data found throughout Near Eastern sites.⁶⁷² Thousands of Ugaritic archives, dating to the Late Bronze Age (1300-1200 BCE), had lists of gods, offerings, and religious functionaries, such as the *qdsh*m, probably of both genders, listed just after the *khn*m (priests), also probably of both genders, hinting at a differentiation between the two categories. However, just like the *khn*m, the *qdsh*m could marry and have families. They also held high status and could occupy other offices. But, to date, there is no evidence from Ugarit that they had a sexual role in the cult, nor is there evidence of sacred prostitution.⁶⁷³ Yet, some information suggests that a *qedeshah*, as her *qadishtu* predecessor, partook in midwifery, wet-nursing, singing, and perhaps sorcery.⁶⁷⁴ Childless Judahite women may have visited the shrine, seeking a *qedeshah*'s services, in order to become pregnant, a pilgrimage that appears to have taken place amongst Akkadian women seeking the same from their local *qadishtu*. This appears to have been a common pilgrimage throughout the ancient Near East.⁶⁷⁵

We know that the Bible remarks on women singing and dancing at festivals (Ex 15:20-21; Jdg 21:19-23). It is unclear whether the official ritual cult of Israel included

religiously designated women dancers.⁶⁷⁶ There is no biblical description of dancing *qedeshot*, although extra-biblical texts offer some clues. The Ugaritic texts support the cultic position of *qedeshim* as singers.⁶⁷⁷ The *qadishtu*'s roles in rituals was to take part in the procession, exalt the deity by holding up its statue, and chant the *inhu*-song (a soothing or lamenting song), play music, dance, and join in various religious services.⁶⁷⁸ As Mann and Lyle proposed, the *qedeshot* may have performed special cultic dances, like the 'dance of the seven veils' well known in Mesopotamia.⁶⁷⁹ The sacred circular dance is perhaps the most common dance worldwide. This magic circle, it has been theorized, symbolically imitated the movements of the sun and moon, and perhaps also the stars, as they circled the sky.⁶⁸⁰ This circular dance may also have had for purpose to consecrate what was encircled, which was commonly an idol, an altar with or without a sacrifice offering, a holy tree, a stone, or even a well of fresh water. In the case of the *qedeshot* in Jerusalem, their 'navel-stone' might have been a pillar (*massebah*), Asherah's sacred pole (*asherah*), or even the foundation stone in the Temple. The *qedeshot* were also mentioned as practicing throughout the land of Judah and Israel and were connected with local shrines and altars built under a sacred tree⁶⁸¹. Thus, the *qedeshot* might have had a lot more functions than was previously attributed to them.⁶⁸²

The *qedeshot* seem to have been accepted as legitimate priestesses, in the folk and official Israelite Temple worship, perhaps performing duties related to fertility, so long as Asherah/Qedeshet was accepted.⁶⁸³ In Jeremiah, the epithet of 'Queen of Heaven' may have referred to the goddess Asherah (Jer 7:18; 44:17-19), and the exiled Judahites fervently worshiped her, though the prophet blamed their neglect of Yahweh as the cause of Judah's fall. The women in Jeremiah led their family and performed rituals and

sacrifices similar to those performed by the *qedeshot* mentioned in Hosea. Interestingly, the text tells us that these people claimed that their worship predated Yahwism and was not always non-public and domestic, but rather part of the official religion, in which kings and queens participated and led the worship. Thus they interpreted the catastrophe as having been brought about by the sins they committed against the goddess, following the Deuteronomic reforms. They may have been the post Deuteronomic *qedeshot*.⁶⁸⁴

The ritual making of *kawwanim* ‘cakes’ and the pouring of libations were probably part of Asherah’s ritual practices. It has been proposed that the root word for this sacred cake came from the Akkadian *kamanu*, which was a honey-sweetened cake offered to Ishtar. Commentators remarked that the *asab* image on the cakes (Jer 44:19) was the goddess’ image, just as the Greeks offered moon pictured *selenai* cakes to Artemis.⁶⁸⁵ Gomer, who seems to be described as a *qedeshah* (Hos 2:13), rejoiced in the feasts of the new moon (*hodesh*) (Hos 2:11) with raisin cakes (Hos 3:1), echoing this practice. One of the priest or priestess’ chief functions, in the absence of calendars, was to keep watch for the new moon. The changes of the moon mark time, forming early man’s first calendar, creating order. The succession of moons regulated agricultural activities; based on the phases of the moon; the priest or priestess told the people when to prepare the ground, when to sow the seed, and when to harvest the crop. A number of regulations depended on the moon cycle, which controlled nature’s laws.⁶⁸⁶ The moon was often also goddess of fertility and sexuality because she not only determined the fate of a woman’s menstrual cycle⁶⁸⁷, but also controled a man’s sexuality through menstrual taboos. Thus a Judahite woman could not engage in sexual relation when menstruating, but once ended, she was free to have sex and offers a dove in sacrifice (Lv 15:30).⁶⁸⁸

ii. Zônot.

As already explained, the concept of 'sacred' combined with 'prostitution' as one term 'sacred prostitutes' does not exist. From the original Hebrew text we know only of 'prostitutes', *zônot*, and 'sacred women', *qedeshot*, but not *zônot qedeshot*. Some scholars differentiate between 'cultic sexual service' and 'commercial prostitution'. However, the Bible sometimes does appear to be using the two terms as being synonymous (Dt 23:17-18; Hos 4:13-14; cf. Gen 38).⁶⁸⁹ Thus, it is possible that indiscriminate professional sexual services, occurring outside the cultural bounds of controlled sexuality, may have been available for hire near temples or within the cultic sphere in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean area, without collecting for the temple any revenue from prostitution. Equally possible is that priestesses may have had functions or duties involving discriminating and controlled 'sacred' religious sexual activities. Though the lines between the sacred and secular spheres might not always have been kept, there were no 'temple prostitutes'.⁶⁹⁰ The sparse biblical identification of *zônah* and *qedeshah* may be responsible for the concept of 'sacred prostitution', which produced an amalgamation of misinterpretation, misconceptions, mistranslation, presuppositions, and inaccuracies, which created this mistaken identity by translators and scholars.⁶⁹¹ Interestingly, Henshaw noted a similar situation in some Mesopotamian texts, where the Akkadian *harimtu* (prostitutes), Sumerian *kar.kid*, are almost never identified with *qadishtu*, but the term is often written close to that of female cultic personnel⁶⁹² in general, especially those connected to the temple of Inanna/Ishtar. Thus it would appear that other ritual texts, along with the Bible, deliberately manipulated the

meaning of ‘sacred/priestess’ by pairing it with ‘prostitute’, resulting in the equation of the two terms as ‘sacred prostitute’. However, a closer look at the terms *kar.kid* and *harimtu* reveal that they do not specifically denote prostitutes, but rather they are legal terms identifying adult women who are not married nor living in their father’s home; in other words, they are independent women.⁶⁹³

We can infer, from the limited isolated biblical references to *qedeshot*, that the Israelite authors perceived some sort of sexual activity in their role, thus identifying them with *zônot* (prostitutes). It is possible that, by the time these events were recounted in the texts by the biblical writer/editor, this polemical misrepresentation consciously perverted an early Israelite or Canaanite practice that involved some form of sexual cultic activity in order to make a statement easily understood by the readers. However, the practitioners might not have understood it as prostitution, but merely as single or independent women’s sexual activities.⁶⁹⁴ The literal association of ‘prostitute’ with ‘sacred woman’ could also be accidental on the part of interpreters, meaning that perhaps the author was not making a literal statement, but rather presenting a politically influenced moral allegory, saying that the women of Israel have gone whoring after other gods by becoming priestesses of those cults. At times it is the land of Judah, or even the people of Israel as a whole who were portrayed as a woman, Yahweh’s adulterous wife, who went whoring after the practices of other countries, usually Canaan or Babylon. This tactic was often deliberately used by Exilic Prophets as a metaphor for idolatry.⁶⁹⁵ Or perhaps there was no metaphorical meaning to certain passages, but because of later polemical passages that made use of such sexual imagery, all of the mentioned *qedeshot*, predating this literary trend, were all interpreted the same way, as a standard.

Just as the terms *kar.kid* and *harimtu* have been revisited and reinterpreted, many scholars are currently doing the same by questioning the translation of *zônah* as a common prostitute.⁶⁹⁶ To better understand the coupling of *qedeshah* and *zônah*, it is important to define *zônah* itself. Rabbinical sources used the term *zenut* in several different ways, making it problematic to define the word. As already mentioned, the term first connotes professional prostitution. As a second meaning, it can refer to the sexual relations of an unmarried woman aimed for pleasure. Thirdly, in a broader sense, *zenut* is often used describing any kind of illicit sexual alliances, including adultery. The sum of these definitions expresses that a *zônah* is a woman who engages in illicit sex, whether a prostitute or not. So a *zônah* is a woman who is sexually independent, ‘promiscuous’ (*zenut*), which, to a certain extent, is what a *qedeshah* was, explaining perhaps why the pre-Deuteronomic writers associated the two terms (Gen 38).⁶⁹⁷ However, following the Deuteronomic reform, *zônah* perhaps became politically associated with ‘whoring’, in the metaphorical sense, ‘unto other gods’, and became solidly linked or interchangeable with *qedeshah*. Finally, in post-Deuteronomic times, the term *zônah* may have come to completely replace the term *qedeshah*, though referring to the same person, and really started to take on the ‘prostitute’ definition. Thus, in later texts, some of these so called ‘*zônot*’ may in fact be a derogatory term that actually refers to *qedeshot*.

Bird argued that the verb and noun *zônah* do not have anything to do with the cult.⁶⁹⁸ However, a few *zônot* seem to have received a reward for their services in the dramatization of the divine marriage, which was technically designated as an *ethnan* (Hos 9:1; Dt 23:19; Ez 16:31, 34, 41; Isa 23:17, 18; Mic 1:7) or *ethnah* (Hos 2:14), being the bride-price, which is very different from a prostitute’s pay.⁶⁹⁹ Gudea, celebrating the

Sumerian New Year marriage rite of Ningirsu and Bau, made up the marriage gift, or bride-price, *ethnan*, which is etymologically comparable to the Assyrian *nudunmu*, *nudnu*, and *nudinmu*, signifying ‘dowry’. This is extremely significant, for in Ezekiel the *ethnan* is identified with *nadan* (Ez 16:33). The Deuteronomic legislation, prohibiting the presentation of the *ethnan* as an offering, was in part probably because it was one of the shrines’ chief means of support, thereby removing the local sanctuaries’ most lucrative source of income (Dt 23:19). Some *zônot* did not store or hoard the *ethnan*, but dedicated it to the shrine and Yahweh. Attendants at the sanctuary used it to provide the *zônah* with food and stately clothing (Isa 23:18; Mic 1:7).⁷⁰⁰ The priests are described as performing the twofold function of eating a common meal and having intercourse with the *zônot* and *qedeshot* (Hos 4), here again equating both terms. Perhaps they were performing a local variation of the sacred marriage rite. The Hosea text suggests that *zônot* were originally legitimately part of the Yahweh cult, their first ‘husband’, before they went to Baal, the ‘lover’ (Hos 2:9). Perhaps the reason they went to Baal might have been the syncretism of Baal and Yahweh. If a *zônah* became pregnant, it was likely taken as a sign of the gods’ favour; after all they went to the shrine seeking the ‘seed of the gods’ (Mal 2:15).⁷⁰¹ Hosea warned the devotees against this cult, because more emphasis was laid on the lucrative *ethnan* rather than on devotion to the deity (Hos 9:1).⁷⁰²

Jeremiah described the *zônah*’s preparation for a religious rite, which she bejewelled herself with scarlet and gold ornaments, penciled her eyebrows with stibium, and generally beautified herself (Jer 4:20, Bar 6:11; cf. Jezebel (2Kgs 9:30), Esther (Est 5:1), and Gomer (Hos 2:13)), in a way that is reminiscent of the Mesopotamian sacred marriage texts. It is not surprising that she was called ‘My Beautiful One’ in the liturgy

(Songs 2:10). She used incense and spices (Hos 2:15; Prov 7:17; Songs 4:11; 5:5; 6:2; cf. Hos 4:13; 11:2) and was especially fond of *eshishoth*, sacrificial cakes consumed in the festivals' common meal (Hos 3:1; Songs 2:5; 2Sam 6:19). These cakes should perhaps be identified with the sacrificial cakes presented to the 'Queen of Heaven' (Jer 7:18, 44:19), as Meek proposed, which were apparently stamped with an image of the mother-goddess (see further Sarah's *ugot* cakes (Gen 18:6)⁷⁰³). According to Hosea, these cakes were made from grapes (Hos 3:10). The etymology of *eshish* or *eshishah* is dubious, for the masculine and the feminine forms do not seem to have any difference in meaning. May suggested that it is related to the Assyrian *eshshu* (to renew), meaning that they were 'cakes of renewal [of life]'. Further, the Assyrian *eshsheshu* refers to a type of offering contained in a silver vessel, which is mentioned among a list of items sent to the sanctuary by the king.⁷⁰⁴ Of course, in the Eden story, the 'cake of renewal of life' would coincide with the fruit of both the tree of knowledge and the tree of life.

When looking at the textual details, it seems that some *zônot* could be interchangeable with the *qedeshot*, and certainly the Bible does equate the two terms on occasion, especially in pre-Deuteronomic and Priestly texts. The term *zônah* at times may have referred to the *qedeshah*'s sexual promiscuity or independence, while in other times, it may have been used polemically to reference the *qedeshot* who metaphorically went 'whoring unto other gods'. With careful consideration of the textual elements, I believe that we can establish a cautious correlation between the duties listed in the text in reference of these two terms, which, in certain cases, referred to a priestess, which helps enrich our understanding of a *qedeshah*'s role.

III. The Ingathering Festival.

When discarding the present traditional dogmatic interpretation of the Eden story, we can speculate on what was the meaning intended by its *literary* author, the Yahwist compiler, who gave the tale its present written form. Students of early human culture think they can partially trace the various earlier forms of the Eden narrative, or its component elements, and other influential texts and factors that affected its creation, which allow for an 'in context' interpretation.⁷⁰⁵ One factor that has rarely been used, when interpreting the text, is the ritual. Perhaps by looking at rituals we may unearth the possibility that some domestic religious activities, such as girls' puberty rites (Jdg 11:39-40), harvest dances (Jdg 21:20-21), or childbirth rites (see Lv 12:6-8), may have influenced the text. Later male shapers and transmitters of the canon may have ignored or not known of these primarily female rites.⁷⁰⁶ This transformation of the Judahite religion into Judaism was a conscious effort made by the post-exilic writers, of the time of Ezekiel and Esdras, in an attempt to separate the Canaanite religious agrarian origin from the ancient Israelite festivals. The New Year feast was purposely omitted from the Priests' Code because of the festival's similarities to the rites of other 'pagan' kingdoms. With this change came also the rites' disassociation from the old 'Canaanite' gods.⁷⁰⁷ Only when taking into account these rites within their context may we discover the significance conveyed to the author's contemporaries in the early monarchic period.⁷⁰⁸

a. Rosh ^CHodesh.

When it comes to the study of the New Moon (Rosh ^CHodesh) festival in Judah and the Bible, scholars like Hallo have a tendency to minimize its importance, attributing it to pagan practices and separating it from Israelite worship against the textual and archaeological evidence.⁷⁰⁹ In biblical tradition, the seventh day of the week is named Sabbath (Shabbat). The word seems to be connected to the Akkadian *sa-bat*, meaning ‘heart-rest’. In Mesopotamia, on the day the moon was full, it was thought that it was resting, for it neither increased nor decreased (which similarly happens on the new moon; the day the moon sleeps or dies), and a feast, name *shabattu* or *shapattu*, celebrated the event. However, there does not seem to be a weekly feast and day of rest comparable to the Israelite Sabbath in Mesopotamia, or in other ancient Near Eastern religions.⁷¹⁰ Based on Akkadian documents, the *shabattu* festival was celebrated only once a month. On the other hand, the Babylonians also had a month named Shabatu, which perhaps coincided with a very solemn *shabattu* celebration that was connected with the sacred marriage rite sometimes performed in this month (see above).⁷¹¹ Nevertheless, the Babylonian *shabattu* festival appears to be a forerunner of both the Sabbath and Rosh ^CHodesh (New Moon) festivities (cf. Hos 2:13), though both these occasions are observed differently according to the biblical text.⁷¹² Yet, the Israelite Sabbath tradition may similarly have begun as a monthly observance and over time it may have followed the lunar cycle by marking the four phases of the moon, beginning with the new moon, which is commemorated by the monthly Rosh ^CHodesh celebration.⁷¹³

From very early times, many people in the Ancient Near East, and elsewhere, believed that only the moon had the power to bestow fertility, causing seeds to grow, and animals and women to bear young. From second millennium BCE southern Mesopotamian iconographic depiction, to legal writings on a first millennium stele from Harran, to the writings of Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE), the moon's power over many things on earth has been noticed.⁷¹⁴ According to Harding, a Jungian, the people who held these beliefs perceived that the woman who became pregnant by the moon was to bear a 'royal' child. This miraculous pregnancy was not dependent on any human sexual act, but only on the moon's doing. Befitting its celestial parentage, not begotten by a mortal father, the baby was marked for some great destiny.⁷¹⁵

According to some Medieval Jewish lore, the King (Yahweh) and the Matronit coupled weekly, on the Sabbath night that led to the Sabbath day. This mythically validated the traditional pious husbands and wives' weekly union (Zohar III 296a). Familiar with the heavenly mysteries, the learned men coupled with their wives, fully aware that they were performing a most significant act, which simultaneously imitated the Supernal Couple's union. In the Kabbalistic view, the sexual act of the pious earthly couple set in motion the generative forces of the mythico-mystical universe, causing the King to emit his seminal fluid and fertilize the Matronit. The fruit of this union was the birth of human souls and angels (Zohar I 12b). If the human wife conceived from that union at the same time as the Matronit, the parents were sure that the child would receive a pure soul from Above, newly procreated from the divine copulation (Zohar II 89a-b).⁷¹⁶

Because the moon disappears and re-appears at the end of its monthly cycle, Rosh ^cHodesh is a symbol of renewal marking the beginning of a new cycle. The Hebrew

word *‘hodesh* (month) is a feminine word that stems from the root *‘hadash* (new).⁷¹⁷ Baumgartner suggested that the New Moon festivities lasted a few days and demanded ritual purity (1Sam 20:24-27, 34). They also seem to have been celebrated in families (1Sam 20:5-6) and in public (Hos 2:13; Isa 1:13-14) accompanied by sacrifices.⁷¹⁸ The fertilizing spark of the moon, symbolized by its light, was usually regarded as sacred fire.⁷¹⁹ Naturally, great festivities accompanied the new moon’s sighting. Rosh *‘Hodesh* was observed eleven times a year; the first new moon of the year, in the month of Tishrei, was incorporated into the Rosh ha-Shanah celebrations. This holy day saw not only the death and rebirth of the moon, but that of the sun as well.⁷²⁰

Morgenstern argued that behind the biblical regulation concerning the high-priest’s annual role on Yom Kippur (Lv 16) and the account of the sin of Uzziah (2Chr 26:16:21), was the ritual extinguishing and rekindling of the altar fire in Solomon’s Temple. Originally, this ceremony was probably part of the New Year’s celebrations before the Asif (Ingathering) festival was separated into three celebrations (Rosh ha-Shanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot (see below)⁷²¹), after which it may have become part of Yom Kippur. In view of the Temple’s orientation, each New Year’s Day, the sun’s first rays would have shone all the way into the Holy of Holies. This symbolically marked the ‘Glory’ of Yahweh entering the sanctuary. At this time, with some personal risk, the king, or his surrogate the high-priest, would have entered the Holy of Holies, censer in hand, and secured the flame, the spark of new life, necessary for the rekindling of the altar fire.⁷²² Waiting to take home a taper lighted from the sacred flame, pilgrims congregated in Jerusalem to witness the kindling of the new fire.⁷²³

In order to synchronize the national holidays for the entire Israelite community, the religious leaders needed to agree on the dates; so they based them on the sighting of the new moon. According to the *Mishnah*, (Rosh Hashanah 2.2-4; 2nd century CE), after the destruction of Solomon's Temple in 586 BCE, torches were lit to provide news of the new moon's appearance throughout Israel and the diaspora of Babylonia. One person, on the mountaintop of Jerusalem, set fire to the beacon with a cedar pole to communicate the news of the new moon. Then the pole was waved every which way until the lighter saw the next person doing the same thing on the top of the second mountain, and so on they lit their own beacon to alert the neighbouring communities.⁷²⁴

The chain of beacons started from the Mount of Olives, over which, from the viewpoint of the Jerusalem Temple, the sun and moon appeared to rise. The next beacon was at Mount Sartaba located east-north-east of Shiloh, followed by another on Mount Grofina/Gryphena, located east of the city of Fihl/Phillum/Pella in north-eastern Samaria. The next beacon went up on Mount Hauran, in the region of the Hauran-Bashan plateau, the source of the Yarmouk River. Finally from Mount Hauran to Beth Baltin, or Biram, in Galilee/Golam, located north of Mount Meron, which was the last bonfire in the line. That person went on waving his cedar pole until he saw the whole of the diaspora, said to be located in the Babylonian district of Pumbedita, present day Fallujah, light up like a bonfire. However, all of these mounts are located within the land of Israel and could not have been seen all the way to Babylonia. It is possible that this event is based on an older new moon ritual, which served the same purpose, performed during the 1st Temple period.⁷²⁵

b. Asif Festival.

Of the three most important agricultural festivals that required the people's presence at the sanctuary in Israel – Pessah (Dt 16:1, 8-9); Shabuot/Kazir (Ex 23:16; Dt 16:10); Asif/Sukkot (Ex 23:16) – the Asif festival held pre-eminence as 'the feast of Yahweh' (1Kgs 8:2, 12:32; Jdg 21:19; Lv 23:39, 41). All three festivals necessitated attendance at the Jerusalem Temple.⁷²⁶ The descriptions of the great Hebrew autumnal festival (Asif) contained in the Bible are of relatively late date. At this stage of its development, after having been accommodated to a lunar calendar, the festival had been separated into a series of independent ceremonies, and reinterpreted, following history, by becoming a memorial to particular events in the career of Israel. Nevertheless, it is possible to recover the festival's original form and discern the broad outline of the seasonal pattern. According to the oldest texts, the Yahwistic (Ex 34:18-23) and Elohist (Ex 23:14-17) Covenantal Codes, the *'hag ha'asif* (ingathering festival) represented the collecting and storing of the produce of the fields (Ex 23:16), of the threshing-floor, and of the presses (Dt 16:13) before the rainy season. In these early days, the Asif took place either at *betzeth hashanah* (Ex 34:22), at the turn of the year, or the *tequphath hashanah* (Ex 23:16), i.e., the end of the year. In spite of the apparent contradiction in the Codes, the 'beginning of the year' is synonymous with the 'end of the year', for both phrasings express the transitional period from the old year to the new year. Since both these oldest calendars refer to the feast of Ingathering (Asif), which was a farmers' feast, these terms evidently stand for the transition period between one year and the next. They thus refer to the same time period, the New Year, which, in this era,

originally fell on or around the autumnal equinox and perpetuated the memory of the old civil and religious yearly beginning.⁷²⁷

There is an obvious relationship between the Hebrew word for religious feast or festival, *‘hag*, and the one for sacred dance, *‘hagag*, in all probability because sacred dances were necessarily performed at religious festivals. The word for ‘religious dance’ is likely cognate with the Arabic *‘hagg*, which means ‘to go round in a circle’ (based on the Semitic root meaning of *‘hag*, ‘a circle’ (cf. Job 26:10; Prov 8:27)), and it probably refers to the common sacred circle dance found throughout the ancient Eastern Mediterranean cultures. Hence, the word for ‘festival’ is probably derived from the characteristic dance that was performed at that feast. Thus, when the Bible refers to the *‘hag* or festival, without specifically mentioning the sacred dance, it is because there was no need to mention it, for it was unimaginable to have the one without the other.⁷²⁸ As mentioned above, the *qedeshot* may have performed this sacred circular dance. It was, in all probability, an act of imitative magic meant to stimulate the deity in order to obtain favours in the form of food. In their dance they may have leapt high to simulate growth, or they may have incarnated the various fertility deities in hopes of affecting and honouring them to produce the desired effect. Their lively movements would have set in motion the invigoration needed for the thing imitated to come to life and produce food. And so, at the harvest festival, the sacred dance might have been performed both as thanksgiving to the deities, because of the bounty the community had reaped, and for the purpose of ensuring good crops and animal productivity in the year to come. Thus, this sacred dance would probably have satisfied two essential needs in the eyes of the community; spiritual and natural/material.⁷²⁹

In the early days of the Israelite settlement in Canaan into the early monarchic era, the Asif festival was comprised of three stages. The festivities started with Rosh ha-Shanah (New Year), which celebrated an unusually solemn Rosh ^CHodesh (New Moon), with a 'feast of trumpets', marking the beginning of the month of the great feasts. This was followed by Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement) on the 10th, and the festival ended with the feast of Sukkot (booths/huts), lasting from the 15th to the 22nd (Num 29:1-39).⁷³⁰ When Philo enumerated the Jewish feasts mentioned in the Bible (Lv 23:24-25; Num 29:1-6) in his writing, he remarked on the 1st of the seventh month, Tishri, as marking the beginning of the sacred month (ιερομηνια).⁷³¹ It does appear that even then these three celebrations were construed as a whole, and, as such, the festival embraces the archetypal pattern of conflict, disaster or death, lamentation, and rebirth or invigoration.⁷³²

During harvest time, the stages of invigoration, accompanied by jubilations, was celebrated by a series of fertility rites that were distributed over Rosh ha-Shanah and Sukkot, and took place on the threshing floors (Hos 9:1, 12:10; cf. Ruth 2:1 ff.). The people brought their flocks and herds for the New Year festival to seek blessing from their king, who participated in the ritual dramatizations as the god Yahweh (Hos 7:5, 10:12).⁷³³ When reading seasonal myths, we must recognize the mythic transmutations that underlie the text with punctual seasonal ritual performances. They usually begin with a combat between the god and the dragon (or some similar adversary). Sometimes, this results in the death of the god, commemorated in mourning rites and the search for the departed deity, followed by his resurrection. Then comes the triumphant procession of the divine victor leading to his installation as king in a temple or palace. Then there is the performance of magical rites, such as the marriage of the god and goddess, which has

a solar aspect, to stimulate rainfall and fertility. All of these phases of the cult mythology and ritual are revealed in passages, such as in the *Book of Hosea*, passages which designate the function of the male and female *qedeshim* in the shrine, the role of the divine offspring, human sacrifices, and many others.⁷³⁴

i. Rosh ha-Shanah.

Rosh ha-Shanah, sometimes called ‘The Day of Acclamation’, was to be observed on the new moon of the seventh month, around the autumnal equinox. It was prescribed as a day of rest and acclamation (*teru’ah*), with a cultic assembly and sacrificial offerings (Lv 23:24-25; Num 29:1-6). Though a late Priestly calendar prescribed the feast, it is hard to know when or what influenced the institution of this New Year feast to be held on the 1st day of Tishri.⁷³⁵ Based on researches and studies done in recent years, a significant number of scholars think that, from a very early period, the ancient Israelites had, in the feast of Ingathering (Asif), a New Year festival whose main outlines resembled the great New Year feasts celebrated in surrounding city-states and nations.⁷³⁶ Like these other festivities, the Israelite version would have contained the reaffirmation of Yahweh’s enthronement and kingship, associated with a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to pay tribute to ‘the King Yahweh Sebaoth’ (The Lord of Hosts) (Zech 14:16).⁷³⁷ In Babylon, one of the features of the New Year festival, the *akitu*, which was celebrated during the first twelve days of the month of Nisan (the beginning of the spring year), was the king’s enthronement as the embodiment of the high-god. The feast, commemorating the renewal of creation, was accompanied by a re-enactment of Marduk’s struggle and

victory over Tiamat. During this time, the *Enuma Elish*, the Babylonian epic of creation, was ritually chanted as a magic incantation of life-giving power that returned the god to life. The god was then acclaimed with the words ‘Marduk is King!’ upon his ascension to kingship, and hymns of praise were chanted under his fifty divine names.⁷³⁸ The same elements can be found in the New Year celebrations of Egypt and Canaan. Not surprising that traces of the same cultic customs are found in the Bible itself.⁷³⁹

Scholars commonly agree with Mowinckel, who was first to theorize that more than 40 psalms⁷⁴⁰ were designed as hymns to be recited at the autumnal Asif New Year festival, especially ‘the psalms of the Enthronement of Yahweh’ dating to pre-exilic times (Pss 47; 93; 95-99).⁷⁴¹ If the Hebrew Asif feast had features in common with the Babylonian *akitu* festival, we may conclude that the central feature of this Jerusalem yearly ritual drama would have celebrated Yahweh’s mighty acts, his enthronement, and renewed kingship over the defeated gods⁷⁴², kings, and nations of the earth.⁷⁴³ Based on Pss 2, 20, 21, 89:2-19, 110, 132, and the commonly called ‘prayer of Hannah’ (1Sam 2:1-10), Schmidt argued that there would also have been an annually repeated enthronement of the earthly king, performed during the New Year/Asif festival, which would have corresponded with Yahweh’s enthronement.⁷⁴⁴ As Mowinckel argued, the Hebrew poetry preserved the myth of Yahweh slaying the primeval ocean or chaos of waters, personified in the chaos-dragon (Leviathan and Rahab (Ps 74:12-17; Job 3:8; 4; 26:12-13)). The king would have ritually enacted Yahweh’s combat and victory over the forces of chaos so as to re-establish order on earth. After repeating this triumph, the world was created anew, as referenced in the poems (Ps 104, etc), and he would have reclaimed the throne.⁷⁴⁵ Some scholars, like Hooke, have even suggested that, during the New Year

festival, a symbolic enactment was performed while priests recited sections of the *J* account of Creation, which, in its original form, would also have included a triumph story before the Garden episode. These texts would have formed part of the liturgy for the New Year section of the Asif festival.⁷⁴⁶ Mowinckel thought that a major element of the Israelite New Year festival (1Kgs 8:2), like the Babylonian *akitu* festival, where the image of Marduk was carried in Babylon, was the procession of the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of Yahweh's presence, when the god was installed in his sanctuary. A Psalm mentions the Ark being carried in procession to Jerusalem from the fields of Jaar, or Kiryath-yearim (Ps 132:6-8), where the Ark had been kept after it returned to Beth-shemesh from the Philistines (1Chr 13:5; 2Chr 1:4).⁷⁴⁷

The Bible also records two individual processions, which, as the psalms would suggest, were most likely part of this annual event. The story of how David brought the Ark to Jerusalem (2Sam 6:1-23; 1Chr 13:1-14; 15:25-16:6) has similarities with these psalms. Years later, Solomon's installation of the Ark in the Temple, during the Rosh ha-Shanah Pilgrim Feast (1Kgs 8:1-13) on the 1st of Ethanin, or Tishri (the Babylonian name for this month), clearly describes this ceremony. The Ark was the focus of both occasions, where its procession was accompanied by music on tambourines and horns, and hymns sung in praise. This liturgy included questions from the priests in the annual procession, and responses were shouted in joy by the people waiting in the courtyard. As the Ark approached the gates, the populace called out, "Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in" (Ps 24:7, 9).⁷⁴⁸ The *shofar* horn was also sounded for the feast, and, as the *Babylonian Talmud* (Rosh Hashanah 32b; c. 600 CE) states, women were allowed to handle and blow the *shofar* for

the purpose of the Rosh ha-Shanah festival.⁷⁴⁹ It should be noted that Josiah, in his reform, appointed the priests to their offices and forbade the Levites from ceremonially carrying the Ark on their shoulders in procession as they previously did. They were instead commanded to leave the Ark in the Temple and serve Yahweh and the people of Israel (2Chr 35:1-3). It is also probably following this reform that the Holy of Holies became restricted to the high priest only (Lv 16:15).⁷⁵⁰ But these laws date from the end of the kingdom of Judah, before which kings, *gevirot*, and *qedeshim/qedeshot* were also allowed in the Temple.⁷⁵¹ Finally, the text suggests that, in the final stage of the New Year procession, as the Ark got closer to the Temple, the festive dancing would have been accompanied by sacrifices at every six paces (2Sam 6:12-15).⁷⁵²

Psalm 114 describes how nature dances in ecstasy when Yahweh demonstrates his divine power. It records how the Sea of Reeds parted during the Exodus, how the Jordan stopped to allow the Levites to carry the Ark into the Land of Canaan, and how Moses, while in the wilderness of Zin, hit a rock with his rod and caused a pool of water to burst forth. It also mentions how the earth trembled at Yahweh's presence, and how the mountains and the hills skipped like rams and lambs respectively.⁷⁵³ All of these ecstatic reactions from nature are reminiscent of the vigorous and passionate dance of joy performed by nature following the victory of the storm-god Baal.⁷⁵⁴ From her window ^{Fg}
¹⁵, Michal, an Israelite/Benjamite princess from the united monarchy in the North who may have held a more traditionalistic tribal Yahwist religion, regarded her husband David's dance before the Ark (symbolizing the presence of Yahweh) with embarrassment. This unique occurrence in the Bible may present David and his companions as imitating nature's awakening at the presence of the victorious god. In this

light, the sacred processional dance, led by David, was an act of imitative magic meant to help the crops grow by inspiring the god to do so. Further, and especially when considering the solar aspect of the Temple and as one of the facets of Yahweh, combined with this dance being performed on the day of the fall equinox, this processional dance may also have served as imitative magic to help the sun run his course and come back in strength for the spring equinox. Finally, the whole purpose of the procession seems to have been to cause Yahweh to ascend to the exalted state of king over the gods/hosts, ‘Yahweh Tsebaot’ (2Sam 6:15, 17-18)’ following the divine warrior’s victory over the sea, Yam (2Sam 5:17-21; here the Philistines are compared with the sea, and Yahweh defeated both; cf. Zec 8; Ps. 89:9-10; Isa 51:9-10, etc.).⁷⁵⁵

Enraptured in this self abandonment, David undressed himself keeping only the priestly *ephod* (2Sam 6:14; cf. 1Sam 2:18). His behaviour is described as vulgar by his wife, which led some scholars to suggest that Michal denounced her husband for sexual impropriety, though she may have perceived him as having been polluted through some abominable Canaanite ritual and having committed cultic impropriety instead of following Yahwistic convention.⁷⁵⁶ It has been suggested that Michal either refused or was rejected from assuming her role in the sacred marriage rite following her indignation at David’s actions, and she was therefore cursed to remain childless while David was elevated to the *nagid* (ruler) of Israel (2Sam 6:16, 20-23). So, in order not to have carried out the ritual thus far in vain, David appears to perform the sacred marriage rite with the *amahot* (maidservant-wives; cf. Ex 21:7-11).⁷⁵⁷ However, aside from Michal, none seem to have objected to David’s dance, which seem to have been perceived as an integral part of the religious celebration. We seem to have here a conflict of two different ways of

worshipping Yahweh; the old Israelite tribal way represented by Michal and the new dynastic and monarchic way demonstrated by David. Thus there also appears to be two distinct royal rituals.⁷⁵⁸ From David's perspective, his sacred dance was an act of imitation meant to flatter his god; it was imitative magic meant to honour and demonstrate his joy for Yahweh, who, in return, would enjoy David's joy-offering and find favour in him. Again, when considering the solar connections with the event, and David's quasi-nakedness, the dance was perhaps performed in honour of the sun. Here, David, in an ecstatic state, could feel the warmth of the sun-god, being one of Yahweh's manifestations, coming in direct contact with his body, taking possession of him.⁷⁵⁹

However, this orgiastic frenzy, in which the celebrants abandon themselves to the rites of fertility, may also be combined with sexual impropriety vis-à-vis the Israelite religion. Let us not forget that David was not of pure Israelite descent; his grandmother Ruth was a Moabite, while his ancestress Tamar was Canaanite.⁷⁶⁰ The biblical narrative appears to have preserved another sacred marriage ritual performed by David. The narrative records how Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, a *gevirah*, became David's wife. The event once again was set in the context of the annual Asif festival. In the evening, from the roof of his palace, David saw Bathsheba bathing. He had her summoned and had intercourse with her which produced a child (2Sam 11:1-2, 4). A similar ritual was carried out on the rooftop of Ras Shamra/Ugarit and in the Mesopotamian *gigunnu* (chamber of nighttime pleasures) located on the highest level of the ziggurat, as Riesenfeld stated.⁷⁶¹

Since the festival took place at the autumnal equinox, there obviously was a solar element to the ceremony, a connection that was also emphasized in the *Talmud* (Ex

34:22). According to the scriptural account (1Kgs 8:12-13; 2Chr 6:1-2), the poem recited by Solomon, when he dedicated the Temple at the autumn festival (1Kgs 8:2; 2Chr 5:3), has obvious solar implication. This traditional chant, used on the occasion of the sun's seasonal decline and metaphoric descent into the underworld, was an attempt to trap the sun-god's sacred fire within his earthly abode, so that the god might be saved from the darkling regions below. This interpretation is proven by archaeological discoveries, which confirm that the Temple was built on a NE-SW axis. The Temple's entrance was oriented directly toward the summit of the Mount of Olives, on which the first bonfire of the new moon was lit.⁷⁶² We can even imagine the Ark entering the Temple by the eastern gate, as the fall equinox sun rose in the east, over the summit of the Mount of Olives. Its rays would pour down directly into the Holy of Holies, and its light would have touched upon the altar, as a kind of solar theophany (1Kgs 8:11-12).⁷⁶³ This perpetual sacred fire that burned in the sanctuary was also symbolically connected to the Davidic Dynasty, and it was meant to be a testimony to Yahweh's promise to David (Ps 132:17).⁷⁶⁴ Finally, once the sun's fire was captured, it was used to relight the altar's sacrificial fire, from which the populace lit their torches and brought home a sacred flame for their hearth. This solar theophany appears to have been typically Judahite and closely linked to the monarchy (2Sam 23:3-4; Ps 72:5-6; Hos 6:3; Ez 43:2), though it was heavily influenced from the Egyptian New Kingdom theology.⁷⁶⁵

The Psalm and the procession of the Ark also clearly celebrated Yahweh's election of David, his enthronement, his Dynasty, and Zion, where the god is said to 'live for ever'. It speaks of the king's enemies as being clothed in shame through his god's victory, elements commonly found in the belief systems of the ancient Near East.⁷⁶⁶

Hooke and his colleagues reconstructed a set of New Year ritual activities that were synchronized to the seasonal cycle of planting and harvesting. The ancient Israelite king would have been humiliated first, then symbolically killed, after which he would have descended into the underworld.⁷⁶⁷ Ritually speaking, one of humanity's oldest beliefs is that the stages of death and rebirth, whether human, plant, or animal, correspond with the phases of the moon. Since the moon, in many cultures, is perceived as the regulator of the cosmic rhythms – subjecting everything from the movement of celestial bodies to the circulation of blood – she was also attributed with the origin or introduction of death.⁷⁶⁸ So Rosh ha-Shanah, which incorporated a special Rosh ^CHodesh, would have marked the day when both the sun-god and the moon-goddess began their descent into the underworld only to return and recreate the world through the sacred marriage act. Following the Near Eastern motif, the king, as the god, would have celebrated the sacred marriage and pronounced the laws of the land.⁷⁶⁹ Finally, after the Ark was installed in its sanctuary, and the proper sacrifices were offered, there was the distribution of royal gifts, which included raisin cakes (2Sam 6:17-19; cf. Hos 3:10).⁷⁷⁰

ii. Yom Kippur.

The Hebrew Day of Atonement was already fixed for the 10th day of the 7th month, even before the Babylonian names were adopted for the months of the year (Lv 23:27-32; Num 29:7-11). In its original form, it was probably the culmination of a ten-day lenten period.⁷⁷¹ Although these liturgies are typical of their respective Near Eastern cultures, when examining the Israelite atonement rituals and their forerunners found in

Babylonian and Sumerian incantation chants, there are several thematic and structural parallels in tone, pattern, imagery, and motif. Though Thompson proposed that the Israelites might have borrowed the religious atonement custom from the Babylonian while in captivity, it is far more probable that this shared fascination with the subtle arts of magic derived from a common source, going back to an oral tradition from a much earlier period, perhaps even as old as the earliest Sumerian city-states. According to him, the Hebrew expression for atonement, *kippur*, is a cognate of the Akkadian term *kuppuru*, behind which lies a metaphor for 'covering'. The Sumerian and Babylonian magic included a sympathetic 'covering' of the victim in need of amends. Thus, a pig or goat was sacrificed and its body used as the 'garment' of atonement. Similarly, the Israelite atonement sacrificial performance, for unrecognized sins and offences, ritually 'covered' the populace against the reckoning of Yahweh.⁷⁷²

Details of the ritual are given in various strata of the late text of Lv 16, which has been re-edited several times. This was a purification rite, meant to cleanse the Temple, its vessels, its cultic personnel, and the people of Israel of sin. The dispatching of a *scapegoat* was believed to remove this impurity. During this stage, as is customary of *mortification* periods, the community observed a public fast and suspension of activity.⁷⁷³ The first ritual⁷⁷⁴, performed by the community on the Day of Atonement, was to offer two goats. Lots were cast to determine which goat was for Yahweh for the sin of the people, and which was 'for *azazel*'.⁷⁷⁵ It should be noted that the Babylonians sometimes sent a kid to favour the great gods and sacrificed a pig or a goat to the demons.⁷⁷⁶ The blood of the goat sacrificed to Yahweh was taken behind the veil of the Holy of Holies and sprinkled over the Ark's cover, *kapporeth*, known as the mercy-seat (Lv 16:15). The

altar also had blood rubbed and sprinkled upon it (Lv 16:16-19).⁷⁷⁷ Once this first ceremony was over, the other goat, set aside 'for *azazel*', still alive, was set 'before Yahweh'. In an act of purification, the high priest once again placed his hands on the goat's head and laid upon it the deliberate and indeliberate sins of the Israelites, as is also mentioned in the Babylonian and Sumerian texts. Then, a man took this goat into the desert, and the sins it carried, and all the people were cleansed by this offering (Lv 16:8-10, 20-22).⁷⁷⁸ According to Rabbinical tradition, the goat was taken three and a half miles east of Jerusalem, to a place called Beth ^CHadudu, or Beth ^CHadudun, modern Khirbeth Khareidan, which overlooks the Kidron valley. Once there, it seems that the goat was cast down the rocks. Since it had been charged with the sins of the people, it was ritually impure, so that this goat could not be used as a victim for sacrifice. Similarly, the man who took the goat 'for *azazel*' also became impure and had to ritually wash his clothes and himself before he could rejoin the community (Lv 16:26).⁷⁷⁹

In the Babylonian *Asakki Marsuti* incantations, as with Hittite and Greek traditions, Hoffner discerned that the distinction between a white- and a dark-collared goat, offered in sacrifice, probably represent both kinds of *shedu* (spirits), good and evil, which clearly associated the white animal with the astral deities, while the black one was for earthly divinities. In the Babylonian ceremony, a dark-collared goat was offered as a sacrifice to the *alu*-demon or *asakku*-demon. So that 'the great gods may remove the evil', the goat's body was burnt with cypress and aromatic herbs (2:29.30).⁷⁸⁰ The white goat, however, a perfect animal used for atonement, seems to have represented the beneficent gods, perhaps even the offerer's personal god, and was often slaughtered to

Dumuzi. Its carcass was split and served as a magical 'garment of protection' for the expulsion of demons and as protection against them.⁷⁸¹

Historically, the goat, offered at the Yom Kippur rite, has given us a problem of interpretation. The English commonly translated this 'goat for *azazel*' as 'scapegoat', though the *Septuagint* and *Vulgate* called it *capra emissaries*, the 'goat sent out'. But the problem really lies with the word *azazel* (Lv 16:11-28). While some scholars sometime translated the word to mean 'for the precipice', Driver asserted that *azazel* simply means 'craggy rocks'. The Israelites would have therefore brought their atonement offering to a desolate barren region. However, this is insufficient in giving a true parallel to the name 'Yahweh' found in the first half of the verse. Thus, a second name should be present. So it is probable that another supernatural being, named Azazel, is also named in this verse. When noting the tendency towards craggy wastes in the non-biblical Azazel legends, we should consider the ancient Babylonian *alu*-demon. This being tends to occupy the wastes and desert regions, and lives alternately in caves or rocky crags. This is how Azazel, in the rabbinic lore and legends of later periods, like the Syriac version, the *Targum*, and even the pseudepigraphic *Book of Enoch*, came to be interpreted as a prince of devils (Is 13:21; 34:11-14; cf. Tb 8:3; Mt 12:43).⁷⁸² The name, on the other hand, has practically been eliminated from tradition and is otherwise unknown in the Bible.⁷⁸³

In the early days, one of the tribes of Israel probably worshiped the desert-god Azazel. By the days of the kings, before the Priestly regulations, the Israelites possibly sacrificed in the cult of the goat-shaped-god. His priests and altars were held in high honour in the country, to the great chagrin of Yahweh's prophets. Hence, extrapolating from the text, we can conclude that, in the eyes of the Israelites, Yahweh and Azazel may

have been equally important. While Yahweh was the divine king of the village gates, Azazel ruled over the pastoral lands. The lives of the people were only reconciled and ritually purified when both gods were appeased by sacrifices.⁷⁸⁴ This tradition persisted through the Exile; however, when the priests read aloud the old rules to the community, the details of the custom had already been lost. The Levitical ritual, which incorporated an old practice of forgotten origin, had become exorcised in a way that made Yahweh's uniqueness clear. While a bull and a he-goat were offered as a burnt sacrifice to Yahweh, Azazel received only the unslaughtered goat.⁷⁸⁵

The origin of this ritual may be partly based on the sacred marriage. At its beginning, as mentioned, in the *hieros gamos*, the priestess represented the most powerful goddess. Inanna is known for her many lovers, who were temporarily termed 'husbands' for the duration of the divine marriage rite. She became considered 'married' only when the god Dumuzi was incorporated into her mythology. It should also be remembered that the sacred marriage ritual became part of the royal ideology sometime after that, before which it seems that she was never considered a 'mother-goddess' in the traditional sense of the word, and she remained virtually childless.⁷⁸⁶ Only later was Inanna said to have had children: Shara, Lulal, and Sutitu.⁷⁸⁷ However, this may just be a misinterpretation of Inanna's diverse roles, which seems to have minimized her maternal side.⁷⁸⁸ Though it is difficult to estimate when the priestess was required to remain childless, it was perhaps before the kings became part of the ritual, when she was still considered celibate.⁷⁸⁹ As long as Inanna was unattached and childless, her high priestess was expected to be the same. We are informed that if a child was conceived from the sacred union, its fate was to be decided by the gods, for the baby was to be left exposed to the

elements, which usually resulted in death.⁷⁹⁰ However, once the sacred marriage became part of the royal ideology, the purpose for performing the ritual, according to Hallo, was for the priestess to produce an heir to the throne.⁷⁹¹ Perhaps that is when a sacrificial goat was used as a ritual substitute for the divine child. Turning to the tale of Cain and Abel, it would seem that Cain's expulsion is linked to a very ancient belief in the sacrifice of the firstling. In the Near East, the best offerings are those of the first-born – first child, first fruits, and so forth – and when it came to the sacred child of a priestess, this eldest son could become a scapegoat to be given back to the gods by being exposed to the elements.⁷⁹²

iii. Sukkot.

Among the liturgical texts, the later religious calendars used the name *Sukkot*, the feast of 'Huts', to refer to the gathering period of the Asif festival (Dt 16:13-15, 16; Lv 23:34; cf. Eds 3:4; Za 14:16, 18, etc.). Since the early calendars go back to before the centralization of worship, the precise date of the agricultural feasts varied a little from year to year, according to the weather and the progress of the work in the fields, so that it was not fixed at the time when these texts were written. Thus, either just before or after the beginning of the year, when all the crops had been gathered in, the feast of Sukkot was held. The present day festival continues the old custom of erecting tree-branch huts in the vineyards and orchards. The farmers assembled in similar local sanctuaries, fittingly called 'the house of wine', to give thanks to Yahweh and celebrate the great fertility-cult trinity of grain, wine, and oil, once the olives and the grapes had been

on a threshing floor (2Chr 3:1). Of course, threshing floors are connected with harvest; thus it is only natural that bread was eaten at the shrine (Ex 25:23-30). In fact, in the people's mind, the threshing floors and the bread of their mouths were viewed as having a religious aspect.⁷⁹⁴ Sometimes called the 'feast of Yahweh' (Lv 23:39; cf. Num 29:12), it was the most important and crowded of the three annual pilgrimages to the Temple, and it lasted seven days. If we leave aside the mention of huts, this exactly describes the events around the dedication of Solomon's Temple, which coincided with the feast.⁷⁹⁵

The distinguishing feature of the 'Feast of Tabernacles' is the construction of booths or huts. According to the late writer of the Holiness Code, these booths were associated with Israel's history of salvation and Exodus from Egypt. Because of this event, and in memory of the 'huts' in which their forefathers live during the Wandering period, the Israelites were to live in huts (Lv 23:43). However, this is a late and unhistorical connection, for while wandering in the desert, the Israelites lived in tents, not huts. Further, the Israelites would not have started celebrating the feast of Sukkot until after they settled in Canaan and began to farm the land. Settled people traditionally set up huts, as the Bible illustrates with the word *sukkot*'s first appearance. Jacob is mentioned as returning from Mesopotamia and settling in Canaan: "He built a house and made huts (*sukkot*) for his cattle; that is how the place came to be called Sukkot" (Gen 33:17). It is natural to assume that the festival was adopted from the Canaanites, since the Israelites were nomads before entering Canaan, and thus they would not have had a harvest festival. Further, this seems to be confirmed by Jdg 9:27, where the Shechemites held a joyful feast in the temple of their god after harvest.⁷⁹⁶

The ancient story of Jdg 21:19-21, where the Benjamites chose wives from the maidens dancing in the vineyard, connects the agricultural festival with the feast of Yahweh performed at Shiloh. This specific vineyard⁷⁹⁷ was probably the traditional place where the maidens (*qedeshot*?) annually performed their sacred dance for the autumnal festival. The story of Jephthah's daughter, who went to the hills with her companions (maidens) to celebrate her virginity, may also indicate a connection with this festival (Jdg 11:37-40). Therefore, the huts set up in the fields were probably nothing more than an Israelite reinterpretation and peasant/popular adaptation of what was originally the bridal chamber for the sacred marriage; only here it was re-enacted by the community.⁷⁹⁸ So, after the harvest was over, and at the beginning of the week-long celebration, the population would have built themselves individual huts, or private *gipar(s)*⁷⁹⁹, where couples would have performed a personal sacred marriage.

To offer a short chronology, a royal sacred marriage ritual would have taken place at the beginning of the Asif Festival, on the day of the New Year. Two weeks later there is Sukkot. In accord with this thesis, this celebration would coincide with the tale of the *bene ha'elohim* ('Sons of God' or 'sons of the gods') and Noah's Ark. The flood is the culmination of the Yahwist's *Creation* scroll (roughly Gen 2-10). The world was created as a dry, barren land that lacked rain and a human to till the soil (Gen 2:5). The first step to remedy the situation was the creation of a human to till the soil (Gen 3:17-19), yet creation was not quite complete until the advent of rain and Yahweh's establishment of the seasonal cycle, which happened at the conclusion of the flood story-arc (Gen 5:29, 8:20-22).⁸⁰⁰ Before the ingathering and the coming of the rainy season, however, members of the community, i.e., the families, may have taken the sacred marriage ritual

home as personal piety, which might correspond with the enigmatic passage in Genesis 6:1-4, with the *bene ha'elohim*. The very short tale records how the *bene ha'elohim* copulated with the *benot ha'adam*, the daughters of the *adam*/men. The union of gods and mortal women produced semi-divine beings, the *gibborim*, who were renowned men, heroes, sometimes interpreted as ante-diluvian kings. This would be similar to the later Jewish Kabbalistic tradition of the sexual union on the Sabbath day's eve that was meant to bring the Matronit and Yahweh together in sexual union (see above).⁸⁰¹ Nevertheless, in their special observance of Sukkot, the farming couple may have insured their own personal agricultural productivity by enacting their private fertility rite.

It is perhaps because of this popular practice performed during the monarchic era that a Women's Court was added to the Second Temple a few hundred years following the Exile. The segregation of the sexes occurred only one time in the year, during the Water-Drawing Festival. Referred to as *Simchat Beit ha-Sho'evah* (Rejoicing of the House of Water Drawing), this ritual, held annually, began on the second night of Sukkot, which was the eve of the actual gathering of water. According to the *Mishnah*, the festivities began at nightfall with the lighting of the golden menorahs in the Women's Court, which was new and a late creation that stood to the east of the Herodian Temple's inner Court. The entire Temple's musical retinue – Levites playing on harps, lyres, and cymbals; flute players; and *shofar* blasters – was in the Women's Court for the great enactment, *tikkun gadol*. Only the most distinguished men partook in the festivities, showing off their physical prowess by dancing and throwing burning torches while singing hymns and psalms, which was reminiscent of pagan festivals. People even carried palms and tree branches, reminiscent of the *thyrsus* that the Bacchantes carried in

their ecstatic dances.⁸⁰² This elaborate and joyous rain-making ceremony represented the element of invigoration, which the *Mishnah* recorded in detail, though apparently absent from the Bible. The *Mishnah* even states: “Anyone who did not see the rejoicing of the Water-Drawing Festival had never seen rejoicing in his days” (Mish. Suk. 5:1).⁸⁰³

The *Mishnah* itself does not explicitly say anything about the separation of the sexes during these festivities (Mish. Suk. 5:2). In fact, men and women were not usually separated during Temple rituals, which makes one wonder what great need could have existed to instigate this segregation just on the night of the second day of Sukkot. The answer seems to lie in the nature of the Water Drawing celebration itself. The rabbinical evidence comes from the *Tosefta*, which suggests that special and concerted efforts were made to separate the sexes. Being aware that the ritual performed during that specific evening was in many ways similar to pagan festivals, organizers probably built a balcony to segregate the women, because both the men and women ‘came to licentious behaviour’ as they watched the festivities (Tos. Suk. 4:1). This would have ensured that the population did not degenerate into ritual sexual activities that resulted during similar pagan festivals, and which the rabbis perceived as loathsome. Thus they sought to distinguish Temple practice from Greco-Roman practice while still allowing women to attend. At the time the changes to the ritual were recorded, bringing about the women’s segregation, there were a number of Greco-Roman cults that had sexual aspects, not to mention a history of similar practices in the Ancient Near East.⁸⁰⁴ However, it should be noted that the sacred dances were almost always performed by one sex or the other separately, and perhaps this is what is emphasized for this specific rite in the celebration.

This separate dancing performance by either sex was also a common practice amongst other cultures surrounding Judea at the time.⁸⁰⁵

Aside from dancing and singing, on the second night of Sukkot there was the gathering of water, which was brought in a priestly procession, while a trumpet made a long-drawn-out sound. The water was carried from the neighbouring pool of Siloam, through the water-gate, and into the Jerusalem Temple. There, a priest solemnly poured the water out upon the ground. The following morning, at daybreak, the water-drawing procession continued, only this time the water drawn was used as water-libations, along with wine-libations, poured upon the altar, all this while the trumpets sounded (Mish. Suk. 4:9, 10; 5:1-4). This rite was performed daily during the seven days of the Sukkot festivities. Many scholars agreed that the purpose for the water-libation ceremony was clearly imitative magic as an appeal for rain. Canaanite and Hellenistic parallels can be easily found, and the Judahites had contact with these cultures during both the 1st and 2nd Temple periods. According to tradition, Yahweh himself informed the Israelites, saying: "Offer water before me on the Feast of Sukkot, so that the rains of the year may be blessed unto you" (Mish. Suk. 3:18). It is therefore not surprising that the Israelites also practiced this ritual.⁸⁰⁶ Lucian recorded an exact parallel of this practice, indicating that it was performed at the Syrian temple in Hierapolis (Membij) twice annually: once at the spring and the other at the autumn festival.⁸⁰⁷ Though the festivity does not seem to have any biblical antecedent, the Bible does mention that the penalty for failing to make the Sukkot pilgrimage to Yahweh resulted in a lack of rainfall (Zec 14:16-17). We also know that the Israelites built booths for Sukkot even in the Temple's courtyard and in the square of the water gate (Neh 8:16). It should be noted that there is not much detail

offered in the Bible concerning the events of Sukkot; thus this 'Water Gathering' might in fact date to an earlier period. Fully developed ceremonies as we have here being performed during the 2nd Temple period are usually not innovations. Typically speaking, traditions are long lasting and reach far back in the history of a culture.⁸⁰⁸

Certainly, once again, there were sacrifices offered, and other rituals performed throughout the week-long festivities, and the whole was probably ended with a closing ceremony that included a sacrifice and a feast once more (Num 29:12-38). Similarly, after the Flood ended, Noah offered a sacrifice that pleased Yahweh, 'when he smelt the soothing smell' (Gen 8:21). The culmination of these ritual events once again set in motion the whole process of nature.⁸⁰⁹ Yahweh's response to Noah's offering does indicate this reinforcement of the yearly seasonal cycle, punctuated with key agricultural events and celebrated with appropriate and corresponding festivities. Thus, Gen 8:22 records Yahweh's words, beginning with the planting of grain in the fall (*zera'*), roughly a month after the Asif festival ended, subsequently followed by its harvesting in the spring (*qatsir*). The next agricultural event came at the harvesting of summer fruits (*qayits*), such as grapes and figs, and finally, back to the autumn harvest (*'horep*). And so we have come full circle. We are back to where we begun, with the Asif festival.⁸¹⁰

IV. The Eden Narrative.

According to Gressman, Eve was an early Phoenician underworld mother-goddess, identified in the area as Asherah and personified by a snake. As a wonderworker, she taught humans how to achieve partial and temporary dominion over

nature, and performed the mythic role of bringing death to humanity. In accordance with this theory, the Eden narrative would have been an etiology of the fertility cult, in which the serpent-goddess, symbol of fertility, helped human beings achieve godhood, though in a fragile way, through the forces released by the ritual. It is clear that, in many ancient mythologies, the mother-goddess unified two phases of existence by bringing death and giving birth to all creatures, a role obviously shared by Eve as the 'mother of all living'.⁸¹¹ Similarly, though the two trees at the centre of the garden, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, are recorded as distinct in the opening section of the triptych (Gen 2:9), Wyatt argued that there can be only one central tree. This is certainly a plausible argument when considering the middle section of the tale that speaks only of one tree, which we assume is the tree of knowledge. Nothing is said of the tree of life until the final framing section when it reappears (Gen 3:22). Some, like von Rad, concluded that the discrepancy is evidence that the narrative is an imperfect combination of two traditions. When looking at the motif, it is likely that there really was only one tree in the garden, and, as the primary image of the goddess who reconciled all pairs of opposites, consisted of two sides (as seen in some Christian iconography of the Eden tree).⁸¹² Likewise, in order to achieve immortality, humans must first gain knowledge through sorrow and death. In other words, to become like a god, the *adam*, must die (like king Dumuzi, the dying-god).⁸¹³ It is not surprising that, depending on which phase of life the son-lovers of the tree-goddesses enacted, they were either born from the tree (as Adonis), lived in the midst of it (as Dumuzi), or were even buried in it (as Osiris).⁸¹⁴

By growing on the surface of the earth, the tree was the great pillar that united earth with heaven through its branches above, and, with its roots below, it linked into the

underworld. Through its trunk the cosmic energies continuously poured into the earthly creation. The sacred tree, like the fig, palm, cypress, apple, sycamore, and olive tree, was planted in the goddess' temple all over the Near East, Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus valley, Crete, and Greece, and the motif continued to exist in Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Buddhist art.⁸¹⁵ In Old Syrian glyptic art, the city-goddess' sacred tree is also linked to kingship, an association perhaps gained through the intermediary of the sacred marriage.⁸¹⁶ Throughout the Levant, couples seem to have believed that, by having intercourse under the shadow of a tree, they were partaking in the fertility blessing of the earth-goddess (cf. Song 8:5), though the Deuteronomist later warned against such practices (Dt 12:2).⁸¹⁷ However, at the time the Yahwist wrote the Eden narrative (c. 920 BCE), it seems that it was not considered blasphemous. Further, during the Iron Age IIA (c. 1000-900 BCE), archaeological findings attest to artefacts bearing the widespread 'tree flanked by two worshipers' motif, which were mass-produced locally on post-Ramesside style scaraboids ^{Fg 16}. These were found throughout Israel and Judah and seem to depict two nude figures (Adam & Eve?), though their gender cannot be determined with complete certainty.⁸¹⁸

The goddess of the Tree of Life was called the 'divine Lady of Eden (or *'edin*, which can mean 'steppe' and 'delight')' in northern Babylonia (see Ashratum above), and 'Lady of the Vine' in the south, because the Sumerian sign for 'life' was originally a vine leaf. In Egypt, the milky juice of the fruit was drunk as the milk from the 'Lady of the Sycamore's' breast ^{Fg 17}, also known as the goddesses Hathor and Isis.⁸¹⁹ The goddess' life and death epiphany was experienced by eating of her fruit tree, located in the garden of the gods. Gods and kings ate of these forbidden fruits – apples, peaches,

pomegranates, figs, etc. – that had aphrodisiacal significance, in order to prolong their youth and life, keep them immortal, offer them renewal, and bring about resurrection.⁸²⁰ Ritually eating and drinking together is part of an incorporation rite, a sacrament of communion and physical union that may be permanent, though it often lasts only during the digestion period.⁸²¹ The fruit also stood for the sacred marriage by symbolizing forbidden sexual knowledge. For example, in Oriental love poetry, the plucking of the tasty fruit is a euphemism for sexual pleasure.⁸²² Similarly, in the Eden tale, when looking at the fruit, Eve sees that it is desirable, pleasing to the eyes (Gen 3:6), and once consumed, the first thing she notices is her nudity (Gen 3:7).⁸²³ The actualization of the tree of knowledge/life was probably depicted as the sacred *asherah* pole ^{Fg 18}, and its forbidden fruit was perhaps the raisin cakes offered as sacrifice to Asherah and eaten as a communal meal (Hos 3:1; Jer 7:17-18, 44:15-25; cf. 2Sam 6:19).⁸²⁴

The serpent archetype, identified by Eliade as the guardian of the sacred trees throughout the Near East, embodies the eternal animating life-force spirit of the rising and falling sap moving within the tree. As such, which Gaster also noted, the snake is supposed to bestow fecundity, knowledge, wisdom, and immortality. The Greeks believed that, since the serpents crept into the earth and frequented tombstones, they were the spirits of dead heroes. The way they can slither into holes in the ground gave snakes a transitional/transcendental quality and connected them with the earth and the underworld. The serpent is moreover continually rejuvenated because it sloughs its skin, and it is therefore believed to be immortal like the gods. This attribute also connected the snake with the moon, which is also rejuvenated through its waxing and waning cycle. In some cases, the serpent was originally the consort of the goddess and itself an aspect of

the living- and dying-god. Further Near Eastern research established that the serpent connoted a phallic symbol in the fertility cults; only fitting that he dwelt in Paradise like the other gods.⁸²⁵ Finally, in the agricultural setting of the Eastern Mediterranean, the snake would perform a beneficial life-protecting role in ridding the fields and threshing floors from rodents that would consume the crops and stored grains.⁸²⁶ The serpent seems to perform a similar role in the biblical text, though he is not plainly identified as the 'protector' of the Tree of Life. However, from the results of his temptation, we may well think of him as the guardian of its fruit.⁸²⁷ Just like the goddess and her sacred tree of opposites, it is only fitting that its guardian would also encompass these qualities. Not surprisingly, the serpent brings both death and life in the story of Moses and the brazen serpent, Nehushtan (Num 21:5-9).⁸²⁸

Based on Ugarit seal illustrations (c. 2000-1600 BCE), Williams-Forte argued that the snake, alongside Baal holding his tree-weapon, is not a depiction of a gigantic sea monster, but of a smaller creature. She thought that the snake, emerging from underneath the young warrior weather-god, is most likely to be Mot, the god of death, whose abode was beneath the two mountains marking the frontier of the land of the living and that of the dead. It is possible that this snake-god of death, Mot, is the one present in the Eden story.⁸²⁹ Yahweh seems to have a close, though somewhat strange relationship with the serpent. It is interesting that, in the middle section of the Eden narrative, while Yahweh is absent, the serpent is present, which caused some scholars, like Burns and Crossan, to suggest that the serpent is Yahweh in disguise. It should be noted that, by the 2nd and 1st centuries BCE, Yahweh appears on seals depicted with serpents for legs^{Fig 19}.⁸³⁰

Some scholars, like Boomershine, argued that the tireless struggle of the Levitical priesthood and the prophets to eradicate all traces of the Canaanite customs, during the late monarchic/Exilic period, is perhaps reflected in the Garden of Eden story of Genesis 2-3. It may have been written or edited to discourage people from following the older religion and the advice of its sibyls. Boomershine even speculated that the text made an appeal to the populace to repent from participating in the fertility cults. Eventually, succeeding religions used the snake to represent evil, a negative interpretation that developed in the late third or early second century BCE according to most scholars.⁸³¹ The snake was a powerful symbol of the goddess, belonging to her priestesses, and for thousands of years it was greatly respected as a sign of their power of prophecy. As Gaster reported, oracles were sought from the serpents kept in Greek temples. Further, according to the beliefs of the ancient Greeks and other Mediterranean people, the serpent was associated with occult magic. Similarly, the Hebrew word for serpent and for divination, *nachash*, both derive from the same root and differ only in vocalization, and both are also presumably related to the word meaning bewitchment or magic curse.⁸³²

Keeping in mind this oracular aspect, Walsh observed the serpent's statement and recognized the structural outline of the Delphic ambiguity encrypted in the plot. As nearly everyone noted, the consequences of eating from the tree are clear and supposed to be immediate (Gen 2:17), yet no one actually dies in this text. This visible contradiction is resolved when we recognize that this is an oracular type of tale. Since Adam and Eve did not die, the serpent did tell the truth. Indeed, as he foretold (Gen 3:5), their eyes were opened (Gen 3:7) and, like gods, they knew good and evil (Gen 3:22). Following the typical riddled and enigmatic divination structure, the true meaning of the oracle

concerning the protagonist's fate is hidden during the exposition and development of the story, only to be climactically revealed in an ironic epiphany. Throughout all three panels of the triptych, the serpent's oracle appears in various incarnations: as prohibition (Gen 2:17), divination (Gen 3:4), and realization or actualization (Gen 3:19).⁸³³

Soggin argued that the serpent's original role in the early Canaanite story would have been positive. While the pagan chief-god told a lie, the serpent-god told the truth, perhaps because of his oracular ability. Similarly, in the Eden tale, in order to keep the human at a distance, Yahweh claimed that the tree would cause death, but his words are revealed to be lies when the serpent gives the truth about the true nature of the tree. Apparently, the snake maintains justice, for he proposes to help the humans attain their rightful power through deification.⁸³⁴ According to Israel's belief, which, at the time the text was written (c. 920 BCE), would be comparable to that of Canaanite religion, the humans are initiated into a noble and sublime sphere. Studied in today's context, the snake of the biblical narrative seems like a demythologized figure, no longer manifesting the importance it once had, retaining only its subtlety and its knowledge.⁸³⁵

It is interesting to note that this tale differs from the familiar archetypal heroic patriarchal story with its traditional pattern that appears in other traditions. What used to be given by the goddess came to be stolen from her by men who killed her guardian. In many cultures we find the story of the primeval man or hero on a quest to find immortality, which is hard to attain. This boon is typically contained in a Tree or Fountain of Life, located in some remote and inaccessible place – the end of the earth, the bottom of the sea, the land of darkness, on top of a hill, or in a 'centre' – and is usually guarded by a serpent or monster. It is the guardian's role to prevent the man from eating

of the tree or drinking from the fountain by tricking him. Thus, in order for the man to succeed in taking of the fruits or water of immortality, he must first fight the dragon-serpent or monster with great efforts and ultimately vanquish it. This combat has an initiation quality, where the man must 'prove himself' in order to become a 'hero' and gain the right to possess immortality.⁸³⁶ In the tale under consideration, however, the gift to be claimed is not immortality, but rather knowledge. Here, without heroic struggle, the serpent entices the woman, and through her the *adam*, to become godlike by violating the divine order. As it stands, the tale is akin to the sacred marriage hymn, where the goddess willingly offers her divine blessings to her chosen lover.⁸³⁷

The sacred marriage texts often use a luxuriant garden as the perfect setting for lovemaking, contrasting it with an arid environment.⁸³⁸ Though it plays a passive role in the Eden narrative, the Garden is more than the setting for the story; it is where the relationship between the divine and the human world is explored.⁸³⁹ Gardens and trees are condemned as scenes for cultic practices and/or erotic encounters by the late biblical prophetic books and Deuteronomic literature, because they are seen as idolatrous.⁸⁴⁰ However, the older sources accepted and embraced these elements, like the Benjamites in the vineyards (Jdg 21:19-21) and Jephthah's daughter (Jdg 11:37-40). Further, in ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian love poetry, the garden or orchard is metaphorically identified with the woman/goddess.⁸⁴¹ In Sumerian love songs, the 'garden of delight, full of joy' is a frequently used imagery for Inanna.⁸⁴² Similarly, in the *Song of Songs* the words 'vineyard', 'garden', or 'orchard', occasionally connected with water, a spring, or a well, commonly describe the Shulammitte (Song 4:12-13, 15).⁸⁴³ In the Sumerian sacred marriage texts, though the royal garden is a projection of the woman, it does not belong

to her. Rather, according to Widengren's study of the Dumuzi and Inanna love songs, the man, i.e., the king, is depicted as the owner of the garden, as is the case in the *Song of Songs* (4:16; 5:1; 6:2). In cultic terms, this implies that one of the king's duties, as Dumuzi incarnate and the provider of life and abundance for his people, is to perform rituals as a 'gardener' in 'the garden', which is also a metaphor for the temple. There he usually takes his bride, Inanna, for the sacred marriage ritual. This task parallels the king's epithet of the shepherd, which suggests that it was his role to guide his people on the right track.⁸⁴⁴ In the *Love Lyrics of Nabu and Tashmetu* hymn, the goddess Tashmetu yearns to go to both the garden and the tablet house. The text purposely associates the 'garden of pleasure', where amorous encounter and sexual union takes place, with the tablet house, Edubba, where one receives wisdom by studying texts; both symbolize a union with the divine. By pairing the garden with Edubba, it is implying that they serve the same function and that, in fact, they are the same. Thus the tablet house is equated with the garden, wisdom, pleasure, and the bride's union with the groom.⁸⁴⁵

When closely looking at 1st millennium love rituals, the garden must either have been the temple, or at least it was adjacent to the temple or palace, since either the god or the goddess (or both together) literally entered the sacred space (perhaps as statues). As we can see, the Mesopotamian evidence supports Wyatt's equation of the Garden of Eden with the Temple and/or the king's garden (*gan hamelek*) in Jerusalem (2Kgs 25:4; Jer 39:4; 52:7; Neh 3:15). Both locations are situated at the centre of the world (Gen 2:10-14), where priests would have carried Yahweh's palladium, the Ark, and perhaps originally his cult image, in a cultic procession.⁸⁴⁶ Wyatt further suggested that the king's garden was most likely located near the well of Gihon, the only source of fresh

water in the city until the Roman era. The Gihon River is named in the Genesis story (Gen 2:13), which is also where Solomon is said to have been anointed king (1Kgs 1:33-34, 38-40, 45).⁸⁴⁷ Wyatt also noted that, while the king's garden may have served as the royal cemetery for the kings of Judah in the 'city of David', the Garden of Eden served as a patriarchal cemetery (Testament of Dan 2:12), where, according to Jewish lore, even Adam and Eve were buried, thus connecting both gardens. Based on this, Wyatt argued that the *adam* in Gen 2:4-3:24 is clearly a royal figure.⁸⁴⁸

The biblical traditions perceived Solomon's Temple and his palace as set apart from all other space on earth. In the mind of the Eden writer, the Garden was probably linked with the Temple of Jerusalem as 'king's garden', especially when considering its decor.⁸⁴⁹ This was not only because Yahweh had chosen Zion as his 'resting place', but also because the Judahites adopted the Canaanite-Jebusite belief that the sacred acropolis of Mount Zion was the *axis mundi*, the navel of the earth (Ez 5:5; 38:12). From this sacred world mountain's foundation stone, order was established at creation, and rituals and ceremonies continually renewed and maintained this order. Thus, under divine decree, Solomon was creating a cosmic centre where he would rule according to Yahweh's command. On the Holy Mount's extremity grew the umbilical cord, connected to the cosmic tree, the *asherah* pole, which provided a link between heaven, earth, and the underworld. Thus, for ancient Israel, the Temple, its Mount, and the city of Jerusalem were transformed into a symbol as well as a reality of the Garden of Eden, where heaven and earth meet, and, at a later time, the new Eden would be the heavenly Jerusalem.⁸⁵⁰

V. The Ritual Text. ^{App 3}

The Eden narrative was not forcibly used as liturgy by the king and the *gevirah*-to-be in their enactment of Judahite sacred marriage rite; this would be more the style of the *Song of Songs* as proposed by Kramer, Henshaw, Pope, and others. Rather, as Eliade pointed out, the ritual depends on the myth, because the story narrates the ‘sacred history’ and assures the proper chronology of events and symbols used during the ritual, a device found in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* that illustrated the Eleusinian Mystery, or even what the *Enuma Elish* was for the *akitu* festival. So, it is likely that, while religious experts privately performed the ritual, the text was publicly read as liturgical narration, which metaphorically recounted the events. The myth, then, as Eliade observed, establishes a link between the acts performed during the sacred primordial times by the divinities and the ritual performed in the historical now by humans. The success of any creation is never better assured than to return to the beginning and reactivate the sacred forces by copying the greatest creation of all. Thus, for all things to be ritually restored to the same state, as when its foundations were laid, it must be done as it was done when the gods did it *for the first time*.⁸⁵¹

As we go further back in history, to when the Eden text was actually written (c. 920 BCE), and as we uncover more about what came before and possibly directly influenced the tale, the likelier we are to find the narrative’s original purpose. Ritual features found in the sacred marriage seem fittingly woven into the fabric of this more or less sophisticated plot.⁸⁵² Gunkel noted that almost all early forms of many biblical texts are mythic and originally accompanied rituals. Thus, as Mowinckel also proposed, these

texts should be reconstructed within the religious life of ancient Israel, because they usually express a cultic and ritual reality as opposed to a poetic fiction. And in light of the aetiology of the Eden text, it is certainly possible that it refers to a fertility rite.⁸⁵³ Yet biblical scholars, just like the late Deuteronomic, Priestly, and prophetic writers, are reluctant to accept such an interpretation, and seem determined to preserve the monotheistic view of biblical history.⁸⁵⁴ Being accustomed to finding the profound and familiar dogmatic religious ideas presently associated with the tale, it is quite difficult for us to recognize accurately the ancient piety candidly expressed in the narrative.⁸⁵⁵

As observed by van Gennep, rituals are triptych in form, consisting of panels that correspond to 'before', 'during', and 'after', and the Eden story follows this structure. The world of the divine and the middle section (Gen 2:21-3:7) of the triptych narrative have the characteristics of a dream, which includes transformation, juxtaposition, paradox, riddle, and masking or disguise. While in this sacred space, characters are transformed during the ritual process by the presence of the divine. Motifs found in the opening sections (Gen 2:4b-20) appear in a transformed or disguised state in the marvellous dream-like centre, and after the humans eat of the forbidden tree, the narrative concludes with a closure of these motifs framing the narrative (Gen 3:8-24).⁸⁵⁶ While the *adam* follows the 'separation-transition-reincorporation' sequence by being brought into the garden, where he gains knowledge, and then exits the garden, Eve, on the other hand, follows the 'enclosure-metamorphosis-emergence' phases, for she is created within the garden, where she also gains knowledge and learns she will be the 'mother of all living', and we assume that she exits as well, though the text does not clearly say so.⁸⁵⁷

The concept of gestation and childbirth is found in numerous initiatory myths and rites, expressed by a series of images representing the beyond as the womb of the Great Earth Mother. The hero, a being of flesh and blood, descends and enters alive into this dangerous transcendent state, without reverting to an embryonic state.⁸⁵⁸ Through the first stage of the ritual, the novice, in this case the *adam*, is put into the sacred garden (Gen 2:7-8), where he is joined by the woman (Gen 2:22-23).⁸⁵⁹ In all myths where a 'descent' is reported, there is an encounter with the chthonian Great Mother in her death-goddess and 'mistress of the dead' aspect.⁸⁶⁰ According to Turner's interpretation of the various symbols, purification rites typically accompany this phase prior to the hero's entering the sacred space. These are performed not only in order to prevent the pollution of the sacred space, but also to symbolically wash away the old identity and social status in order to express ambiguity and paradox that eludes the cultural classifications arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonies. As an experience in humility, the liminal *persona* or neophyte's behaviour is ground down to the level of clay, and the initiate's attributes are likened to being in the womb, to invisibility, darkness, death, etc. This womb-like uniform condition is equated with the tomb in many cultures because both are associated with the earth that gives life and receives death. Thus, neophytes are treated as neither dead nor alive, and yet they are simultaneously both.⁸⁶¹ The word 'neophyte', by which initiants are commonly known, literally means 'newly implanted', and perfectly illustrates the link between initiation and invigoration, the latter often identified with rebirth. It also illustrates the ideas of regeneration and immortality, two concepts associated with admission into the ancient mystery cults.⁸⁶²

Since clothing is a means of social definition, during the ritual trials, the initiants may wear only a strip of clothing, go naked, or wear something that emphasize their shared humanness, which is both a symbol of, and an instrument to attain what Victor Turner refers to as *communitas*, which is everything that stands in direct contrast to all the notions of society. Similarly, our primal couple is nude and not ashamed (Gen 2:25), and they are generically identified as ‘man’ and ‘woman’ (Gen 2:23), without any consciousness of social structure or sexual and work roles.⁸⁶³ The state of *communitas*, during the liminal period, lends tremendous insight into the true nature and meaning of the state within the Garden of Eden. This places in bold relief the specific motifs found in the following emergence theme, ‘out of the Garden’, with its contrasting structured state.⁸⁶⁴ Once in segregation, new rules are introduced and the initiates are told to behave in a special way, otherwise a divine being will capture and kill them. Hence, during the entire initiation, the novices feel religious fear and terror for the first time, and undergo a number of ordeals, including various dietary taboos and prohibitions. And so we have the divine warning against eating of the Tree of Life, lest they die (Gen 2:17).⁸⁶⁵

The central moment of the majority of initiatory ordeals must be understood in relation to what it prepares. In order to become truly human, it is necessary to cease to be a natural being and resemble a mythical model by incarnating one of those divine beings.⁸⁶⁶ Looking at the Eden myth, we notice that it simultaneously summarizes and combines two aspects of human life, which may have been in the narrator’s mind. One passage clearly presents a childlike life, running around naked without judgment. Then, at one point during the tale, the characters mature, become wise, and put on clothes. After this transformation, they assume new positions in society. While the boy is sent to

work in the field, the maiden stays home.⁸⁶⁷ Further, at the cusp of these two aspects, the Eden narrative has a series of obvious sexual elements woven into the story, hinting that it was originally a text of a sexual nature. From what is left, it seems as though the sexual matters are presented to adolescent children as forbidden knowledge denied by adults, making it even more dangerously exciting and desirable.⁸⁶⁸ By itself, there is insufficient information in the text to ascertain exactly what the original purpose of the sexual motifs was. The older recessions of the text would have bluntly displayed the sexual element in evidence, which the Hebrew text chastely veils. However, with the help of cross-referencing, it is very possible that it was a matrimonial sexual encounter.⁸⁶⁹

The fact that fertility cults were common practices throughout the nations of the Fertile Crescent is undoubtedly an element in favour of recognizing this mythico-ritual pattern in the area of Israel. Naturally, as Pedersen, Dussaud, Albright, Ahlstrom, Soggin, and many others have pointed out, fertility rites influenced the early Monarchic religion and found their way into the Jerusalem Temple. However, rather than observing this practice as the result of a popular corruption brought about by pressure from the masses, scholars argued that it was part of the kingdom's official religion. The Davidic monarchs almost unanimously endorsed and maintained, if they did not initiate, the fertility ceremonies of the Temple for more than three hundred years. Only three kings – Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah – in three widely separated time periods succeeded in expelling the *qedeshim*, and Asherah, from the Jerusalem sanctuary, temporarily suspending the fertility practices. Their successors, in most case their own sons, are recorded as quickly re-establishing the cultic *status quo*. It was not until late in Israelite

history that orthodox Jewish groups, beginning with the prophetic and Deuteronomic circles, adamantly rejected the fertility cult.⁸⁷⁰ These late biblical writers were biased and documented Israel's accepted practices as a constant struggle, while they tried to separate these popular practices from what they termed the 'official' religion by prohibiting sexual rituals newly branded as Egyptian and Canaanite customs (Lv 18).⁸⁷¹

For Eliade, the association of sexuality with fertility was not a desire to seasonally regenerate the forces of the sacred, but a belief that these acts were repeating the mythical activities that created the cosmos.⁸⁷² As Boomershteyn and McKenzie observed, the mystic communion that commonly took place between the worshiper and his gods in fertility cults was attained through ritual intercourse. When combining the sexual elements with the character of the serpent-divinity, a phallic symbol often associated with fertility cults who teaches the human couple the divine powers inherent in ritual sex, it allows the worshipers to share in the divine prerogative of procreation, temporarily making them 'masters of the force of life'. Considering the fusion of sources, such as a Sumerian inspired paradise story tucked into the central section of the text, a reasonable explanation discloses an underlying Canaanite-inspired Yahwist fertility cult.⁸⁷³

Some of the Babylonian Marduk and Zarpanitu ritual texts, as well as those of Ishtar, clearly indicate that the later ceremonies involved cultic personnel other than the king and the priestess. During the consummation of the sacred marriage, these cult officials ritually acted the roles of other characters involved in the rite, while the priestess and the king were transformed by the divine and joined together in the presence of a key third divine being.⁸⁷⁴ Malul studied the Mesopotamian texts and found a description of the role of the *nugir-si/susapinnu* (a paranymp or best man). He noticed that, based on

comparative evidence from other cultures, this character did not have a close relationship with the groom; rather he was closely linked to Inanna/Ishtar, or the bride.⁸⁷⁵ Priapus, Pan, Bes, Eros, and other such gods are all phallic or erotic-gods and carry a different meaning from that carried by Tammuz, Adonis, and Attis, who are vegetation- and dying-gods. They are a third entity symbolizing, and perhaps responsible for the sexual union of the masculine essence or principle with the feminine power, embodied in the dying-god and the mother-goddess; the serpent in the Genesis story may have performed such a role vis-à-vis Eve as the goddess' hero.⁸⁷⁶

As Eliade mentioned, the 'other world' is also a place of knowledge and wisdom, where the Lord of the Underworld is omniscient. In the Eden story, this 'Lord' is the clever serpent, the trickster, who is simultaneously the most human and the most divine creature in the garden, making him the perfect intermediary between the sacred divine realm and the profane everyday human world. In the ritual, his role is played by the old masters of the tribe, the spiritual elites of archaic societies. It is they who know and reveal the transcendental world of spirit, the truly human world.⁸⁷⁷ The priest, playing this role, brought gifts to the bride and, carrying a weapon at his side (thighs), protected her against evil demons likely to attack during her wedding night.⁸⁷⁸ The use of masks by the ritual leaders represents the parental aspects of the role performed in rituals. Turner speculated that the aggressive character of the 'parents' provokes a strong effect on the initiate, and desiring to possess this animalistic authoritarian parental power, the neophyte assumes and imitates these animalistic attributes.⁸⁷⁹ This is reminiscent of the Greek plays, in which the humans playing the parts of gods wore masks representing the specific deity. Priests perhaps similarly represented the snake in the rite.

Being blank slates, the initiates must obey their mentors in order to be refashioned with the tribe's knowledge and wisdom, so as to cope with their new responsibilities and not abuse their new structural privileges. Finally, they are offered universal human values like health of body and mind, fertility of womb and field, and equality before the divine.⁸⁸⁰ To share in this mystical condition with the founder of the mystery, the initiate must ritually die. Thus, initiation and death become interchangeable in order to make the move towards a higher status.⁸⁸¹ And so, by eating of the forbidden fruit, which is said to cause instant death (Gen 2:17), the *adam* and the woman ritually die from the 'before' status to be symbolically reborn in the 'new', more mature stage of life, befitting the knowledge they have acquired.⁸⁸² In this action, the woman is both the initiator and the initiate, for not only does she initiate the *adam*, but she initiates herself as well.⁸⁸³ Thus, the most important effect of the indispensable novice's symbolic death is the religious values gained by the conquest of the fear of real death and the belief that the human being can survive as a spiritual being. From this religious experience, the novice emerges a victorious hero with god-like attributes, such as omniscience and/or immortality.⁸⁸⁴

Typically, in a ritual, the girl learns sacred songs and dances and certain feminine skills, specifically spinning and weaving.⁸⁸⁵ After Eve ate of the tree of knowledge, she realized that she and the *adam* were naked, as did he. So they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves girdles (Gen 3:7). Though the text appears to mention both the man and the woman as making each their own girdle, spinning and weaving has come to be consigned specifically as a yoke upon all of womankind.⁸⁸⁶ Throughout the Bible we find women weaving in relation to the cult, from the women who spun the threads to make the Tabernacle tent (Ex 35:25-26) to the *qedeshot* who sewed dresses for Asherah

(2Kgs 23:4-7). Originally, these ‘dresses’ for Asherah were probably meant to clothe the priestess incarnating her after the sacred marriage was consummated and she came out for the banquet, though, by the time of its mention in 2Kings, the dresses appear to have been meant for the cult statue of the goddess. Asherah herself has been identified in Hittite and Ugaritic texts as a weaving goddess. When considering the material used by Eve in making her girdle, it should be noted that wild plants – hemp, jute, elm, linden, willow, and the list of usable plants goes on – can be manufactured into bits of string and rope on the spot, by twining it against the thigh. From the cord of Lascaux (c. 15 000 BCE) to the early Neolithic string and cloth found in the Near East (7000 and 5500 BCE), all the earliest string and thread that we possess consist of plant fibre.⁸⁸⁷

We also know that, over a broad geographical area and throughout 20 000 years, we have archaeological artefacts and statuettes of women wearing little string skirts.⁸⁸⁸ The small Palaeolithic ‘Venus’ figure found at Lespugue, France (c. 20 000 BCE), carved of bone, has a skirt fashioned of ten cords hanging only in the rear, suspended from a twisted hip band. These ten strings have been interpreted as being suggestive of the ten lunar months of pregnancy.⁸⁸⁹ The ‘Venus’ of Gagarino from Russia (c. 20 000 BCE) sports a similar, though shorter and tidier string skirt than her French sister, but it hangs only in the front, and covers just as little ^{Fg 20}.⁸⁹⁰ We find an increasing array of clay figurines depicting women in string skirts during the Neolithic period, and they come from sites in central and eastern Europe.⁸⁹¹ The reason why these sculptures came to be called ‘Venuses’ was that heavy emphasis has been placed on carving the breasts, belly, and pubic area. What is interesting about the string skirts that these figurines wear is the longevity and spread of this tradition. Though there are a few local variations, the

purpose of the string skirt seems to have remained virtually unchanged for well over 20 000 years. It is certain that whether Palaeolithic, Neolithic, or Bronze Age, this skimpy string skirt could not have provided much warmth. Further, it certainly did not cover much either, not even enough to hide what our modern Western culture believes a woman needs to cover in order to be modest. Quite the opposite, the skirt frames the female sexual areas, and attracts the eye by presenting and partially hiding these features.⁸⁹²

In the 14th book of Homer's *Iliad*, Hera prepares herself to seduce Zeus and temporarily divert his attention from the battlefields of Troy. She goes to her divine apartments and dresses herself with her 'girdle fashioned with a hundred tassels' so that her husband will not be able to resist her. She then asks Aphrodite to borrow her girdle as well. Homer wrote that into the goddess of sexual love's archetypal girdle 'have been crafted all the bewitchments – in it are Love and Lust and Flirtation', and in her hands we might call it a mating girdle. This 'girdle of a hundred tassels' is nothing more than the familiar string skirt. It is not surprising that, when Zeus sees Hera coming toward him across the mountaintops, he picks up on the 'love making' signal, and, forgetting everything else, he demands that she lie with him then and there.⁸⁹³

In all cases, the 'string skirt' or 'tasselled girdle' was worn by women and appears to have been a fundamental part of their wardrobe. These string skirts can still be found in some Eastern European and West Asian countries as a cultural continuation of this tradition, where they are still used in case of 'childbearing emergencies'. The reason why people went through the trouble of making and wearing a garment that was so non-functional, and maintained this tradition for over 20 000 years was because it played an important role in their societies.⁸⁹⁴ Around the world there are clear markers of social

classes. With slight variations in different societies across Europe and West Asia, this string skirt was a powerful symbol and a cultural marker that empowered its wearer. The string skirt was specifically associated with women and carried a considerable sense of honour. It possibly certified that its wearer had reached puberty and menarche, but not yet menopause, so that she was a woman who possessed the mysterious ability to bear children and create new human life. In other words, it would appear that the string skirt signalled the peak of a woman's sexual procreative power. Along with this, the string skirt was also likely a signal that indicated a woman's marital status.⁸⁹⁵ When considering these features, the girdle that Eve made for herself may have been a string skirt. On the other hand, the girdle that the *adam* made for himself would similarly have represented his attributes, in this case his maleness and religious status. It is therefore possible that his girdle was the priestly *ephod* which David is said to have worn when he danced before Yahweh (2Sam 6:14; cf. 1Sam 2:18). However, this is merely speculation, since the Eden narrative does not offer much detail in regards to these girdles. Nonetheless, when analyzing the text in a religious and ritual context, as is being done here, it is not impossible that sacred and ritual garments would have been involved.

Eating of the fruit is said to render one like the gods; however, being godlike is not defined in the text itself. The two chapters of Genesis under consideration do reveal that Yahweh's chief attributes as a god are neither immortality nor omniscience, but rather creativity and fruitfulness or fertility – planting a garden, causing trees to grow and produce fruits, bringing forth living creatures – all of which are done with the help of the fertile earth, the *adamah* or even Adamah⁸⁹⁶. There is evidence that Adamah/Adamma was a popular earth-goddess at Ebla. However, she became exclusively worshiped by

royalty when her cult was brought to Ugarit, where she may have been closely linked to queen of the gods, Athirat. It is entirely possible that in the Levant, where Asherah appears to have certain attributes of an earth-goddess, Adamah may have been perceived as an aspect of Asherah. Nonetheless, sowing seeds in the soil is a common sexual metaphor, and the text implies that Yahweh performed such an act to bring about, not only vegetation, but perhaps even the *adam*. Certainly, the sexual activity of the deities is a dominant motif in the ancient Near Eastern mythologies, as we have seen, and it is also very important for society. Creation was regarded as divine procreation.⁸⁹⁷ Definitely, Yahweh is presented as a potter, like many other Near Eastern gods (see the Egyptian Khnum), who formed the human foetus in the earth mother's womb. Then, the male *adam* is born from the female *adamah*, the genders being clearly indicated in the Hebrew, suggesting that she was his mother.⁸⁹⁸ Benjamin even goes on to argue that Yahweh acted as a miwife by bringing the child, the *adam*, out of the earth-goddess Adamah.⁸⁹⁹

Perhaps the most prominent theme word in the Eden tale, aside from the word *adam*, is the word 'to eat', from the root 'kl. It draws attention to pivotal actions and features of the story. In the narrative, the first words spoken concern the food supply available to the *adam* (Gen 2:16). This striking repetition in the biblical myth tells us that, in the beginning, human existence was concerned with food, its source, and, of course, fertility, hinting that the story stems from a farming people.⁹⁰⁰ Aware of the Israelite daily struggle for sustenance, and living amongst them, the writer saw first hand how human existence depended on the availability of growing plants.⁹⁰¹ Using a structuralist approach, Jobling suggested that the purpose of the Eden story is to establish a race of human beings to till the soil. The lack of humans and plants at the beginning of

the narrative results in barrenness and thus no creation (Gen 2:5). This negative equation is later restated in positive terms (Gen 2:15, 3:18), where a living being now exists to work the land.⁹⁰² Thus, after eating from the forbidden tree, the *adam* and the woman are like gods. While the woman can create humans (Gen 4:1), the *adam*, like Yahweh, can bring fertility to the barren land.⁹⁰³ This is in accord with van Gennep's ritual purpose, through which, once fulfilled, the neophyte is awarded a new position, officially confirmed, and reincorporated into the stable social group, where it is expected that the individual will apply the knowledge acquired in the sacred world.⁹⁰⁴ Concerned with food production, the myth equates the *adam*, the first human who is the archetype of the king and represents all humanity, with a farmer and a gardener. Both epithets were euphemisms for the Mesopotamian king, who also represented his countrymen and became identified with the god Dumuzi when performing the sacred marriage fertility rite. Through the *hieros gamos*, the primordial man, taking on the role of the god, gains the crucial blessing of fertility, not only for himself, but for the entire community.⁹⁰⁵

Bechtel argued that Genesis 3:15, which has traditionally been interpreted as the future relationship of the woman and the snake in view of the sin, should be understood as referring to the relationship of the man and the woman and their male offsprings. She proposed that the man and the woman would struggle and, most importantly, that their sons would be subject to sibling rivalry, resulting in the woman's son assuming power over the man's eldest son. In many biblical stories, these brothers have the same father but may not necessarily have the same mother; for example Ishmael and Isaac. Bechtel, however, compared the Genesis 3:15 passage to the rivalry between Esau and Jacob, and indirectly between Isaac and Rebecca, by suggesting a struggle between the first born

patriarchal tradition versus the youngest born matriarchal tradition. The tension between primogeniture and ultimogeniture is a reoccurring pattern throughout the Bible, and especially in Genesis, not only with Esau and Jacob, but also Cain and Able, Ishmael and Isaac, Manasseh and Ephraim, to name a few. In all these cases it is the youngest born who receives the blessing to rule over the others, and in the case of Ishmael and Isaac, it is not only the youngest born, but it is also the child of the 'favourite wife', the *gevirah* (Gen 16:4, 8, 9). This clearly illustrates women's role in designating succession of the child born under special sacred circumstances.⁹⁰⁶

As part of the initiation's closure, there is the rite of incorporation, which can be performed in a variety of ways. We have such practices as offering the other something to eat or drink and consuming it together, or even putting on the dress of adults or married people. The ability to give birth or being pregnant also has a collective significance for the woman.⁹⁰⁷ As seen with van Gennep, the initiates are expected to go through a change, and at the end of the rite there is rebirth. The neophytes are now endowed with new positions in the social hierarchy, accompanied by greater privileges and obligations to uphold the social structure impressed upon them during the initiation. This is made clear when they are given titles, new clothes, and additional powers representing their new social status. Naming or changing the name is a rite of incorporation found not only in rites of baptism, but also of initiation, marriage, and enthronement; therefore it both individualizes and incorporates the individual into a new group in society.⁹⁰⁸ In the Eden tale, this is made evident when the *adam*, in a 'performative utterance', renames the woman Eve (*hawah*), and pronounces her the

‘mother of all living’ (Gen 3:20), which is a common honorific title for certain creatrix goddesses. Her name also resembles in sound the Hebrew word ‘life’ (*hayah*).⁹⁰⁹

Though the education given to a girl during the seclusion period is generally that of the sanctity of life, its essence is pre-eminently a religious experience consisting of a revelation of the mystery of child-bearing, the sacrality of womanhood, and universal fecundity. Essentially, the novice becomes conscious of this natural transformation and is ritually prepared to assume a mode of being that will exceed what is perceived as a proper adult woman so as to become a creatrix.⁹¹⁰ So Eve can bear children, in her own words: “I have created a man with Yahweh”, and in turn she names her sons, showing that she actively exercises her new role in the world (Gen 4:1-2). Eve thus represents the womb-like fertility of both the Garden of Eden and the *adamah*/Adamah, from whom everything was born. Similarly, both *‘hawah* and the *adamah* are dependant upon the *adam* for fecundity; just as he sows seeds in the earth, so does he sow his seed in the woman.⁹¹¹ This reminds us of fertility rites, where, though the goddess is crucial for the ritual, the focus is on the god, the fertility bringer. Of course, this is made obvious by the widely used metaphor of the goddess as earth or ploughed field and the god’s rain as seed.⁹¹² It is interesting that the ‘be fruitful and multiply’ command of Gen 1:28 is also applicable here (Gen 3:16), though the latter has been interpreted negatively, as a curse.⁹¹³ In light of these parallels, Gen 2:4b-3:24 could be better understood as an awakening, for there is a natural movement towards maturity and the realization of identity, rather than a rebellion and sin that resulted in punishment and ‘the Fall’.⁹¹⁴

It is possible that *adam* and *‘hawah* are the titles of religious experts and they might be theophoric in nature. The *adam* is clearly named after the *adamah*/Adamah,

from whom he came into being (Gen 2:7). As already explained above, this may be the earth-goddess herself and another name or epithet for Asherah. Eve, on the other hand, or more accurately *ḥawah* (חַוָּה), is said to be etimologically derived from the word ‘life’, *ḥayah* (חָיָה), and can mean ‘She who gives life’, hence her honorific title ‘mother of all living’. Her name is also similar to the name of the Israelite god, Yahweh (יְהוָה). The only differences are the missing *yud* (י) and the *ḥet* (ח) letter as oppose to the *hey* (ה). Indeed, the name of the Israelite god is said to be derived from the root ‘to be’ (הָיָה). The verbs ‘to be’ and ‘to live’ are synonymous and express the concept of existence, which points to a common derivation.⁹¹⁵

In this way, as Jobling suggested, the *adam* would be an earth priest and the *ḥawah* a sky priestess, in other words, she would be the wife of the sky-god and thus the human representative of the earth-goddess, i.e., Adamah/Asherah.⁹¹⁶ That the *adam* is perceived as a priest may perhaps be derive also from the words used when describing his function in the Garden. The text records that the *adam* was instructed to ‘till and keep’ the Garden (Gen 2:15). The only other biblical passages that use these two words together document the Levites’ duties in ‘guarding and ministering’ the sanctuary (Num 3:7-8, 8:26, 18:5-6). As for the connection between Eve and the earth (Adamah), the Apocryphal writing of *Ecclesiasticus of Jesus ben Sirach* associates the womb of the mother with the tomb of the earth, the latter being given the title of ‘mother of all’ (Sir 40:1). This is reminiscent of *ḥawah*’s honorific title as ‘mother of all living’ (Gen 3:20). The ancient Greeks and Romans, as Eliade noted, associated tilling the soil with the act of procreation. He also noted that the earth or soil is identified with the womb

throughout Mediterranean folklore. We should also remember, as mentioned above, that *‘hawah* is an epithet of Asherah as goddess of serpents⁹¹⁶. So these religious experts would have incarnated their archetypal role in performing the cosmic marriage between Yahweh, the sky-father, and Asherah, the earth-mother. Finally, the Akkadian word *ama*⁹¹⁷ (mother) may also have influenced Eve’s name.⁹¹⁸

Once awarded a new identity, the initiate is officially reincorporated into a stable social group. While the ‘loincloths’ individuated and differentiated the genders of the *adam* and *‘hawah*, the robes of leather that were handed to them (Gen 3:21) identified their new status in the society. Turner’s list contrasts the structured state of society with the non-structured state that appears during ritual passages. It includes virtually all of the features found in the Garden and after-Eden description. So, as there were no clothes in the liminal state of the Garden, now the humans have clothes. Before the man and the woman were without clear roles, now the man is a tiller while the woman is a child-bearer. The list of comparison goes on. Thus the primordial couple was ready to emerge from the sacred garden into the socially structured Eden knowing sexuality, clothed, and with defined roles. The life passage ritual is complete.⁹¹⁹ The threshold separates the sacred world from the profane secular world. It is not surprising that menacing creatures of monumental proportion guard the gate; in the case of our tale they are the *kerubim* (Gen 3:24)^{Fg 21}. By exiting the sacred space through this portal, the initiate is presented as possessing a new social and personal status. Van Gennep also remarked that non-sexual phallic objects were erected as boundary markers at the entrance of the sacred space. These pointed objects were used as protective weapons and guard the holy dwelling, just as does the flaming sword (Gen 3:24).⁹²⁰ Having been nourished and

consumed by the rite, the magic circle is broken and can never be wholly closed, for once the ritual is enacted, the individual cannot return to the previous stage.⁹²¹ It is expected that the transformed individual will apply the knowledge acquired in the sacred world. And so, the *adam* returned to the world with divine knowledge (Gen 3:22-23) and applied it (Gen 3:17-19), as did Eve (Gen 3:16, 4:1), both fulfilling their new social roles.⁹²²

VI. Proposed Reconstruction.

According to Johnson and de Vaux, the ancient Jerusalem autumnal Asif festival was part of the Israelite cultus dating to the monarchic period. However, the evidence from the Hebrew Bible is limited. From a methodological point of view, it is a perfectly valid procedure to rely on the available information and rebuild this festival with the aid of comparative work. Thus, the Judahite fertility ritual can be reconstructed on the basis of the few fragmentary sources available in the Bible, along with cross-referencing with similar texts from surrounding contemporary influential cultures. Only through this enlightening investigation can one fill the inevitable lacunas that exist in the records of these ancient cultures.⁹²³ Eliade defined the two categories of rites performed in the New Year festival as follows: first, there are those that signify a return to Chaos, which symbolically corresponds to death, such as extinguishing fires, expelling 'evil' and sins, etc.; second, there are those that symbolize order and the cosmogony, which would be lighting new fires, repeating the divine acts by which the world was created, predicting the weather for the ensuing year, and so forth.⁹²⁴ What I am suggesting, in my theory based on the research elaborated above, is that, when we look at similar texts and rituals,

the Judahite New Year festival followed a specific pattern beginning with a ritual combat, in which the god triumphed over his enemies. Following this conquest, the king, incarnating the god, led the victory procession and was trailed by a train of cultic personnel impersonating lesser gods or visiting deities. Once the god entered his palace, the king enacted the sacred marriage rite in the temple with a *gevurah*-to-be, a rite which would have brought about the divine blessing. A priest would have narrated the entire event to the public by reading out loud the myth of creation. Finally, there would have been a festive banquet celebrating the successful conclusion of the ritual.⁹²⁵

Thus, on the day the moon disappeared, two days before the new moon marking the 1st of the year, the preparation would have started. Inside the Temple, the 'second priest' (*kohen mishne*) would have ritually extinguished the altar's sacred fire, while the king took the Ark out of the Temple to a temporary location at Kiryath-yearim (1Chr 13, 2Chr 1:4), 8 miles northwest of Jerusalem. At that time, one of the *qedeshot* from the king's harem would have been chosen by omens to perform the sacred marriage.

The following day, the day of the old moon, the ritual combat would have been enacted by the king at Kiryath-yearim, a combat which was meant to celebrate Yahweh as leader of the forces of light and his original triumph over the monstrous forces of the chaos or primeval oceans, personified in Leviathan and Rahab.⁹²⁶ By combining *Job* (Job 38:7) with the *Psalms* (Pss 74:12-17; 89:9-10; 104) and *Isaiah* (Isa 51:9-10), and with scattered passages from *Nahum* (Na 1:2-8), *Proverbs* (Pr 8:22-29), *Habakkuk* (Ha 3:8-15), and other similar verses, plus cross-referencing with other Near Eastern texts like the *Enuma Elish*, we arrive at a composite vision of the archaic cosmogony that probably existed, as composed by the *J* source, before the present version of Genesis 1.⁹²⁷

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, the *gevirah*-to-be's attendants, the *qedeshot*, would have prepared a bridal chamber, '*huppah* (Ps 19:5; Joel 2:16)⁹²⁸, in the Temple, under which would have been set the sacred marriage couch⁹²⁹ or bed (Song 1:16) purified by the 'second priest'⁹³⁰. Ritual offerings were probably made during that day, along with incense burning. Pilgrims would have started to gather in Jerusalem and probably have brought animals for sacrifice for the New Year feast.

The next day, New Year's Day, the day of the new moon, around the autumnal equinox, at dawn, there would have been a procession to the Temple, to which the symbol of the god's presence, the Ark of the Covenant, would have been brought back to Jerusalem before the sun rose. The king, who, in this dramatic ritual was the accepted 'Son' of Yahweh, the true Messiah, would have led the parade. Animals would have been sacrificed at every six paces; parts were to be presented as offerings while others were for consumption in a communal meal (2Sam 6:12-15). Royal gifts would also have been brought for the Temple and for the bride price, such as bdellium perfume, gold, and lapis lazuli (Gen 2:12).⁹³¹ The choir probably sang a processional, such as Psalm 24, as the priests carried the Ark through the streets of Jerusalem unto the Temple precincts' outer gates. So that the great warrior-king Yahweh could pass through, the personified gates were implored to lift their heads (lintels) high (Ps 24:1-4, 7-8).

As the sun rose over the Mount of Olives, the march would have advanced onward; the procession would have climbed the monumental stairway leading to the *ulam* or portico, where the symbolic 'gate of heaven' was marked by the great bronze columns Joachim and Boaz. The *kerubim* decorated Temple doors (1Kgs 6:31-32) would have opened and the autumnal sunlight would have flooded the *hekal*⁹³², a 40 cubits long room

or outer sanctum used for worship (1Kgs 6:17). The sun's rays would have reach the golden back wall of the 20 cubits square innermost room or shrine named the *debir*⁹³³, later called the 'Holy of Holies' (1Kgs 6:16, 19-20), illuminating the throne room, where the sun's sacred fire would have been captured and used to rekindle the light on the altar inside the Temple. The Ark would have been carried through the central hall, decorated with the flora and fauna of Eden, complete with palm trees and *kerubim*. Finally, the Ark would have been placed at the foot of the two giant *kerubim* in the Holy of Holies, where Yahweh would have sat 'invisible' upon the *kerubim*-throne with the Ark as a 'footstool' (Pss 99:1-5, 132:7; 1Chr 28:2). This symbolically represented Yahweh's final act of enthronement as king in the assembly of the gods. This dramatized series of events would have marked the beginning of the New Year by demonstrating Yahweh's might and power in creating (or re-creating) the world and guiding history.⁹³⁴

Outside the Temple, rituals and sacrifices would have been performed during the day, and, in the afternoon, the deified king would have entered the Temple, where the *gevurah*-to-be would have been awaiting his arrival after being prepped by the *qedeshot*. There, the royal couple would have performed the sacred marriage rite.⁹³⁵ The Temple doors would have closed behind him as a *qedeshah*, the faithful servant of the *gevurah*-to-be, would have brought the king into the Holy of Holies, where the high-priestess would have waited. The *qedeshah* may have requested, from her mistress, to bless the king with a long life and a stable rule, as well as the renewed fertility of the lands and wombs of the kingdom. The divine couple would then have been left to themselves behind the veil or doors inside the *devir*, while the cultic personnel would have remained in the long room

or *hekal* of the Temple, where temple personnel played music. The *qedeshot* probably sang hymns and perhaps danced in circle around a sacred stone (*massebah*) or the altar.

Alone, in the *devir*, the king and the *gevirah*-to-be would have first disrobed. Then the king would have lain on the bed or couch while the queen would have gone to the statue of Nehushtan to request an oracle or favourable omen from the serpent-god, which would then have been interpreted by the Zadokite high-priest (Dt 33:8-10).⁹³⁶ The *gevirah*-to-be then would have gone over to the *asherah* stylized tree and would have taken of the raisin cakes (Jer 7:18; 44:19; Hos 3:1). She would have eaten of it. Then she would have gone to the couch and would have given some to the king to eat, in order to induce an ecstatic state, preparing them to both receive the divine spirit and become one with their respective deities for the purpose of the ritual. They then would have ‘experienced’ their nakedness and enacted sacred intercourse.

After its completion, they would have garbed themselves in religious clothing; she might have worn a ‘string skirt’ identifying her as married and able to bear children, while he may have worn the priestly *ephod*. They then would have received the divine blessing for both themselves and the population. The flow of the Gihon River⁹³⁷ would have been reassured to provide potable water for the Jerusalemites. As representative of the goddess and of all the females in Israel, the queen would have been blessed with fruitfulness of the womb. As the incarnation of the god and the entire population, the king would have been blessed with agricultural abundance. The ceremony would also have reaffirmed the king’s status, while the *qedeshah*, if the sacred copulation resulted in the birth of a divine child, may have been elevated to the status of favourite wife in line to become a *gevirah*, while that child would have been named crown prince and heir to

the throne. Regardless, the priestess would have become ‘the mother of the living’ and would have been introduced to the community as such. The couple would then have been presented with ritual garments, with which they would have dressed themselves.

During this time, cultic personnel would have chanted hymns in the temple, while worshipers would have kept vigil outside the holy place. After sunset and the rite’s consummation, the moon would have risen and the first crescent would have been seen. The *kerubim* engraved Temple doors would have opened and out would have come the divine couple with the *qedeshim* and *qedeshot* in train. With them, a special attendant, perhaps a priestess or the ‘second priest’, would have carried and waved every-which way a torch with the sacred flame, born from the renewing powers of the divine union. This ritual expert would have come to relight the sacred fire that would have announced the capture of the sun’s essence, the appearance of the new moon, and the spark of life born from the successful enactment of the sacred marriage ritual. The worshipers would have partaken of the sacred flame and brought a tongue of it home to relight their household hearth.⁹³⁸ Additional animal sacrifices would have been presented as burnt offerings, part of which would have been redistributed to the population for consumption (Lv 3). This would have marked the beginning of the communal banquet celebrating the New Year, where bread and raisin cakes would also have been given to the population to eat (2Sam 6:12-19; cf. Hos 3:10). This might have been the first day of the Asif festival.

Conclusion:

Ancient Israel's popular religion significantly overlapped with the official religion. This ancient worship was an integral part of Israel's religious life and was equally legitimate, if only by the sheer volume of its practitioners. It integrated nature and society, health and prosperity, and the individual's ultimate well-being. Despite the prophets' vigorous oppositions, and the reforming kings' radical innovations, we can gather, from the biblical texts and archaeological findings, that their protests were anomalies rather than a return to some pristine purity, and, through these changes, the people of Israel maintained their ritual practices, which they considered Yahwistic. The major elements of this popular religion seem to have included the frequenting of *bamot* (high places) and other local shrines. These sacred spaces included a hill, trees, an altar, *massebot* (standing stones), *asherot* (sacred stylized trees), the baking of cakes, and various aspects of solar and astral worship where divination and sorcery were practiced. It also probably involved the worship of Asherah. In fact, what characterized this complex and rich cultic tradition was more than the pilgrimages and saints' festivals, the planting and harvest celebrations, and the *marzeah* feasts (funeral banquets). It incorporated childbirth and children rituals, perhaps even child sacrifice, various funerary rites, such as libations for the dead, and even wailing over the god Dumuzi's death.⁹³⁹ These elements are often assumed to characterize the 'folk' religion of 'hearth and home', located almost exclusively in the women's realm. However, ancient Israelite family religion, especially in rural areas far from the Jerusalem elite influence, would also have involved many men. For example, the life-bringing goddess Asherah was the

patroness of both men and women.⁹⁴⁰ Meanwhile, in the capital of Judah, in the period immediately following David's capture of Jerusalem, we can assume that, if there was a Jebusite *hieros gamos* rite, it probably did not go through extensive reshaping. However, if there was a reshaping, the evidence does not offer any description of it. All we can do, from the available evidence, is point to the fact that it possibly existed.⁹⁴¹

Later, in Israelite history, as urban life increased, the processes of nature and food production became detached from the operations of humans, giving rise to new religious concepts that eventually replaced the traditional ceremonies. With this came the ever-developing radical monotheistic religious thinkers – the Deuteronomist, reforming kings, and post-exilic prophets – who rejected the theological bases of the economically and socially important fertility cult. Their obsession with cultic purity tended to express national guilt in terms of impurity and uncleanness⁹⁴², connoting the realm of sexuality. They targeted these ancient elements of Israelite worship by eradicating all its visual symbols and turned the sacred marriage fertility rite into a 'sin', by making it an element of disorder and disintegration, while they made Israel's religion evermore abstract.⁹⁴³ And so, as Asherah was pushed aside and monotheism became the norm, the text, recounting the ritual survived by reason of its wider mythological significance. The radical thinkers, seeing the connection between the Eden story, its tree(s), and Eve and the fertility cult and its sacred *asherah*-pole 'under every green tree' and even in the Temple, probably began to use the tale polemically. The text may have been detached from its function, but it could not be erased from Israel's traditional history. So, it was reinterpreted and probably edited as an 'anti-Canaanite' polemic used against the fertility cults it used to represent. What produced life and fertility in Canaan came to be

interpreted, in late Israel, as a warning against impiety, ritual sex, sacrilege, polytheism, and disobedience or rebellion against Yahweh, which were believed to cause death and drought. By reducing the serpent to a simple animal, rather than a heroic protagonist, and by eliminating the happy ending that would presumably have crowned the original story, later biblical interpreters took their stand. They gave the text a negative inclination (i.e., the Fall, curse, and punishments), and, eventually, it became considered a myth.⁹⁴⁴ However, Boomershteyn proposed that the text might have been used as an appeal to the populace in hopes that they would repent from following such fertility cults.⁹⁴⁵

The Judahite sacred marriage rite, as a result of opposition brought by certain influential groups, may have been discontinued or declined in importance during late pre-exilic times. Since this was women's religion, the new interpretation used this female link to claim that a woman caused this religious downfall. Thus, no longer was the priestess the goddess incarnate who performed the sacred marriage rite with the god, but the harlot who slept with the devil. The 'mother of all living' no longer produced life and fertility; she was now the temptress who brought death and barrenness to the world.⁹⁴⁶ The Temple's destruction in 586 BCE caused a national trauma that resulted in the spread of a collective consciousness of sin, and the creation of nostalgia and idealism concerning its provenance and existence, which began the reinvention of the past.⁹⁴⁷ After the post-exilic restoration, with the coming of the Priestly source and the beginning of proper Judaism, Yahwism was victorious and the Eden story was no longer polemical. Possibly, Judaism may not have been fully aware of the pre-exilic *hieros gamos* ritual, its implications, and importance. Thus, by then, the more doctrinal interpretation of the text as disobedience and sin started to be put into place.⁹⁴⁸

Introduction:

¹ Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.16, May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.73, McKenzie, 'The Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2-3', p.572, and Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, pp.4, 72.

² Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.16 and Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.77.

³ Walsh, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach', p.161.

⁴ Most scholars agree that the Garden of Eden story, as a written account closely resembling what we presently have, is one of the oldest narratives in the Hebrew Bible and they date it to the 10th century BCE. (Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature*, pp.163-164, Bloom and Rosenberg, *The Book of J*, pp.9, 47, Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, pp.149-150, Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p.10, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.97, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.92, Rendsburg, 'Reading David in Genesis', pp.23, 26, Speiser, *Genesis*, p.xxviii, and Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, p.3) It must be mentioned, however, that some scholars date the text to circa 586 BCE, following the return from the Babylonian Exile, while others see this time period as being the source of later redactory work on the original document written in the 10th century. (Alter, *The World of Biblical Literature*, p.162, Bloom, *The Western Canon*, p.5, Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, p.157, Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p.10)

⁵ The Eden narrative has been the subject of many research studies, monographs, and articles following the advent of critical science in theology. These complex and in-depth explorations often contradict each other, though there is one point on which they all seem to agree: that the original meaning of the text contradicts the traditional interpretation presented by the Church. The tale has been interpreted by Christians as a cautionary and origin story where the Devil, under the guise of a legged serpent, tempted Eve, the mother of humanity, and she, in turn, tempted Adam. Following this disobedience, God cursed and punished Adam, and Eve, causing all of womankind to be obedient to their husbands. This hierarchical relationship imposed by God influenced the gender dynamics of the western world for centuries. It is primarily to this religious tradition of 'original sin' that I refer when I speak of 'dogma' and 'tradition'. In the Jewish tradition, from the *Wisdom of Ben Sira*, also known as *Ecclesiasticus*, to *The Book of Jubilees*, the *Talmud*, and onward, there has been a similar interpretation of the text. From the early rabbinic literature Eve was believed to have been polluted by Satan, with which her posterity also share in the cursed (*Babylonian Talmud; Tractate Sabbath*, 146a), bearing similarities to the Christian 'original sin' concept. Ben Sira is almost certainly referring to Eve when he stated that "Sin began with a woman, and because of her we all die" (Ecc 24:24). Rabbis have also been known to use the story of Adam and Eve as a metaphor for human sexuality with which they defined Jewish sexual practices in terms of both what was inappropriate and what was acceptable. There was therefore a certain emphasis on the theme of shameful nakedness (Jub 3:26-27), on disobedience, and on the obligation to procreate. The Islamic tradition also understood Satan as the snake and offered similar theological interpretations (*The Qur'an* 2:35-37, 7:19-25, 20:120-121). However, on a general basis, these latter two traditions tend to interpret the account on a historical level rather than theological. Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.77-78, 82, Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall; Temptation*, pp.64-87, Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, pp.22-23, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.251, note 18, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.75, Pagel, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*, pp.xxi, 12, Patai, *Gates to the Old City*, pp.185, 455-456, St. Augustine, *City of God*, pp.320, 324, St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, p.72, Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, pp.156-158, 176, 245-247, and Von Rad, *Genesis*, p.74.

⁶ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.543 and Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.72.

⁷ Horwitz, *Wrestling with Angels*, p.45, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, pp.3, 72, 87, and Dragga, 'Genesis 2-3: A Story of Liberation', p.3.

⁸ Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and Feminist Readings of the Garden of Eden', p.1.

⁹ Dragga, 'Genesis 2-3: A Story of Liberation', p.3.

¹⁰ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.87.

¹¹ Engnell, 'Knowledge' and 'Life' in the Creation Story', p.106.

¹² Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and Feminist Readings of the Garden of Eden', p.2.

¹³ Over the last 150 years or so, modern scholarship has developed the theory that the Hebrew Bible was written by more than one individual over a period of hundreds of years. These various sources were

merged together over time and are somewhat discernable in translations, but they are more identifiable in the original Hebrew. Though a few scholars have begun untangling these sources well before him, Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) is attributed as being the one who pooled these discoveries together and organized them in a clear, organized theory that is now accepted as standard by the majority of scholars. Thus, in the book of Genesis, there is generally identified the *J* source, being the oldest and usually understood as being from Judah. It is known as *J* because the respected German scholar Johann Gottfried Eichhorn identified that source as referring to the deity as Jehovah (Yahweh), because in German the *J* is pronounced like the English *Y*. Then the *E* source is usually dated to about 100-200 years later than *J* and attributed to northern Israel, typically Ephraim. It was identified by Eichhorn as *E* because that source refers to the deity as Elohim or El, the Hebrew word/name for God. Then we have the *P* source, short for Priestly, usually understood as a school of thought, which is typically concerned with priestly laws, rituals and worship, and genealogies. It is dated to sometime after the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, between 722-609 BCE, probably during the reign of king Hezekiah (715-687 BCE). However, though the *P* source may have originated with one author living in the time of king Hezekiah, it continued as a school of thought well after the return from the Babylonian Exile (c. 587-539 BCE). Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, pp.25-27, 52-53, 210 and Speiser, *Genesis*, pp.xxv-xxvi, xxxiv.

Development:

1. *Methodology:*

¹⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.1-2.

A. Myth School:

- ¹⁵ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.40.
¹⁶ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.43-44.
¹⁷ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.40, 43.
¹⁸ Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.14.
¹⁹ Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.1 and Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.52.
²⁰ Fontenelle discussed in Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.641.
²¹ The Grimm brothers, Gunkel, von Rad, Wright, Wellhausen, and Robertson Smith are all discussed in Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.46-47, 53.
²² Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.49.
²³ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.53.
²⁴ Bultmann discussed in Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.48.
²⁵ Cross and Childs discussed in Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.51.
²⁶ Eliade and Ricoeur discussed in Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.54-55.
²⁷ Gaster quoted in Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.55.
²⁸ Fontenrose discussed in Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.55-56.
²⁹ *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.42, 44, 59, and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.633.
³⁰ Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, pp. 630-631, 637.
³¹ Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, pp.642-643.
³² Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.59-60 and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.646.
³³ Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, pp.647-648.
³⁴ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.80, Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.5, Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.61, 64, and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.644.
³⁵ Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, p.39 and Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, pp.5-6.
³⁶ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.80, Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, pp.5-6, Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.61, 64, and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.632.
³⁷ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.61 and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.644.
³⁸ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.70-72.

- ³⁹ Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, p.42, Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.4, Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.54, 74-78, and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.646.
- ⁴⁰ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.79-81.
- ⁴¹ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.79 and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.648.
- ⁴² Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.6.
- ⁴³ Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, p.36 and Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, pp.7-8.
- ⁴⁴ Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.649.
- ⁴⁵ Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, pp.38-39, Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, pp.6, 8, Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.80, and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.650.
- ⁴⁶ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.82.
- ⁴⁷ Bell, *Ritual*, p.43, Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, pp.44-45, Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.9, Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.85, 89, and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.651.
- ⁴⁸ Bell, *Ritual*, p.43, Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.9, and Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.85.
- ⁴⁹ Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, pp.49-50 and Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, pp.10-11.
- ⁵⁰ Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, p.52.
- ⁵¹ Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, p.52.
- ⁵² Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.11 and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.653.
- ⁵³ Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.2.
- ⁵⁴ Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.13.
- ⁵⁵ Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, pp.2-3.
- ⁵⁶ Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology*, pp.3-4.
- ⁵⁷ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.89, 237-238, Fisher, *Woman's Creation*, p.6, Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy*, pp.3-14, Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, pp.12-13, Stuckey, *Feminist Spirituality*, pp.14-20, and Weigle, *Martha, Creation and Procreation*, p.xi.. Carol Christ discussed in Stuckey, *Feminist Spirituality*, pp.15-17.

B. Myth & Ritual School:

- ⁵⁸ Gaster, *Thespis*, p.77.
- ⁵⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.3, 5 and Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.65.
- ⁶⁰ Bell, *Ritual*, p.4, Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, p.40, and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.645.
- ⁶¹ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.65-66.
- ⁶² Bell, *Ritual*, pp.3, 5 and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.645.
- ⁶³ Bell, *Ritual*, p.5, Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.1-9, and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.645.
- ⁶⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, p.5 and Powell, *Classical Myth*; 3rd Edition, p.645.
- ⁶⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.5-6.
- ⁶⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.3, 5.
- ⁶⁷ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.3, 5 and Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.66-67.
- ⁶⁸ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.66-67.
- ⁶⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, p.6.
- ⁷⁰ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.68.
- ⁷¹ Doty, *Mythography*, p.75.
- ⁷² Damrosch, *The Narrative Covenant*, p.64 note 13.
- ⁷³ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.3, 5.

⁷⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, p.6, Damrosh, *The Narrative Covenant*, p.64 note 13, Doty, *Mythography*, pp.51, 73, Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, pp.64-65, and Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, p.5.

⁷⁵ Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.65.

⁷⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.5-6.

⁷⁷ Bell, *Ritual*, p.16 and Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, p.51.

⁷⁸ Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*; 6th Edition, pp.4-5.

C. Ritual School:

⁷⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.14-15.

⁸⁰ Bell, *Ritual*, p.23-25 and Graft and Marier, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*, p.41.

⁸¹ Bell, *Ritual*, p.24.

⁸² Bell, *Ritual*, p.26.

⁸³ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.38-39.

⁸⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, p.44 and Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, p.217.

⁸⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, p.30.

⁸⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, p.29.

⁸⁷ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.28, 48.

⁸⁸ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.9.

⁸⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, p.47.

⁹⁰ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.37, 94-95, Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.2-3, 128-129, Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, p.31, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.39.

⁹¹ Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.2-3, 128-129.

D. Rites of Passage:

⁹² Henderson and Oakes, *The Wisdom of the Serpent*, pp.42, 54.

⁹³ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.189.

⁹⁴ Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, pp.156-157.

⁹⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, p.36, Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.x, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.3, 188.

⁹⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 95 and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.10-11.

⁹⁷ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.94-95, Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, p.196, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.177.

⁹⁸ Bell, *Ritual*, p.94.

⁹⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.37, 94-95, Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, p.31, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.39.

¹⁰⁰ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.35-37 and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.3, 183.

¹⁰¹ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36-38 and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.3, 39.

¹⁰² Bell, *Ritual*, p.95 and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.19-20, 23-24.

¹⁰³ Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, p.48, Henderson and Oakes, *The Wisdom of the Serpent*, p.48, and Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p.94.

¹⁰⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 95, Henderson and Oakes, *The Wisdom of the Serpent*, pp.48-49, Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p.94, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.15-16, 21, 25, 109.

¹⁰⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, p.95 and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.19-20, 23-25.

¹⁰⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, p.37.

¹⁰⁷ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.15-16, 19-21.

¹⁰⁸ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 95, Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.94-95, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.15-16, 21.

¹⁰⁹ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.108.

¹¹⁰ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 95, Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.94-95, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.109.

¹¹¹ Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, p.196 and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.177.

- 112 Turner, *The Ritual Process*, p.95.
 113 Bell, *Ritual*, p.42 and Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.95, 102-103, 169-170, 172, 201.
 114 Bell, *Ritual*, p.42, Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, p.219, and Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.95, 102-103, 134, 167, 169-170, 172, 201.
 115 Turner recasted van Gennep's three-stage sequence to demonstrate the dialectic between the social order present in a structural hierarchic community, and the social disorder of the propertyless egalitarian anti-structure present in what Turner termed *communitas*. The ritual dramatizes the real situation by offering a liminality where the *communitas* are within bounds, between the old social order and the new reconstituted order, and where a series of orchestrated acts relieves the stresses and tensions. (Bell, *Ritual*, pp.39-42 and Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.127-129, 136.)
 116 Bell, *Ritual*, p.42 and Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.95, 102, 106-107, 134, 146, 169.
 117 Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.174-175.
 118 Bell, *Ritual*, pp.40, 42 and Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.95, 102-103, 169-170, 172, 201.
 119 Bell, *Ritual*, pp.10-11 and Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.x-xiv, 59, 129.
 120 Bell, *Ritual*, pp.10-11, Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.x-xiv, 59, 129, and Eliade, *The Sacred & the Profane*, pp.68-72, 80-82.
 121 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.131 and Eliade, *The Sacred & the Profane*, pp.91-93.
 122 Bell, *Ritual*, pp.10-11.
 123 Bell, *Ritual*, p.37 and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.3-4.
 124 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.xiii.
 125 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.x, xii-xiv, 52, 103.
 126 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.51, 61-62, 64-65, 132.
 127 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.x, xii-xiv, 1, 52, 66, 103, 131-132.
 128 Bell, *Ritual*, pp.10-11 and Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.x-xiv, 59, 62, 129.
 129 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.x-xi, xv, 3, 132.
 130 Bell, *Ritual*, p.11.
 131 Bell, *Ritual*, p.89.
 132 Bell, *Ritual*, pp.53, 56.
 133 Bell, *Ritual*, p.56.
 134 Bell, *Ritual*, p.59.
 135 Bell, *Ritual*, p.238 and Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.42.
 136 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.45.
 137 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.42-47, 80.

2. *Ritual*:

A. The Sacred Marriage Rite:

- 138 Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.27, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.1,
 Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.61, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.30.
 139 Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.1 and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*,
 p.30.
 140 Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62 and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*,
 p.30.
 141 Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.27, Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.139-140, Lapinkivi,
The Sumerian Sacred Marriage, p.1, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.30.
 142 Buttero discussed in Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.11.
 143 Nissinen discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.83 note 286.
 144 May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.84. Comparatively, the Israelite Asif festival lasted from
 Rosh ha-Shanah to the end of Sukkot on *Shemini Atzeret*; about 21 days, i.e., from new moon, through to
 the full moon, and ending on the last quarter. (Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.83 note 286.)
 145 Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.51,
 Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 49, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.20, and
 Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58.

- ¹⁴⁶ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.51, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.20, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.58.
- ¹⁴⁷ Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.33-34.
- ¹⁴⁸ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.29, 52.
- ¹⁴⁹ Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 57, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.16, 52, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.58. Klein discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.52 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.58.
- ¹⁵⁰ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 49, 57-59, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.16, Leick, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, pp.49-50, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.31.
- ¹⁵¹ Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.57-59.
- ¹⁵² Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.17.
- ¹⁵³ Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.57-59.
- ¹⁵⁴ Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 57-59, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.52, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.58.
- ¹⁵⁵ Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.60-61, 212, 214, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.1-2, 29, 52, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.33, 57-58.
- ¹⁵⁶ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.11, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.60-61, 212, 214, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.1-2, 29, 52, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.33, 57-58.
- ¹⁵⁷ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.14, 29.
- ¹⁵⁸ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.11, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.60-61, 212, 214, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.1-2, 29, 52, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.33, 57-58, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.32-36.
- ¹⁵⁹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.51-52 and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.32-33.
- ¹⁶⁰ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.76, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.1-2, 14, 29-30, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.46.
- ¹⁶¹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.76-77 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.63, 81-82.
- ¹⁶² Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.76 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.1-2, 14, 29-30, 81-82.
- ¹⁶³ Bertman, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*, pp.130-132, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.76 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp. 30-59, 81-82.
- ¹⁶⁴ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.76-77 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.30-59, 63, 81-82.
- ¹⁶⁵ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.76 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp. 30-59, 81-82.
- ¹⁶⁶ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.83, 90.
- ¹⁶⁷ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.88.
- ¹⁶⁸ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.76.
- ¹⁶⁹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.42, 51 and Leon, *Uppity Women of Ancient Times*, p.16.
- ¹⁷⁰ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.83, 88-89.
- ¹⁷¹ Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p.49.
- ¹⁷² Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.30-59
- ¹⁷³ Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.18.
- ¹⁷⁴ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.5-6, 11, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.52, 59, 62, 76, Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.78-79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.6, 15, 81-82, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58.
- ¹⁷⁵ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.16.

- ¹⁷⁶ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.5-6, 11, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.52, 59, 62, 76, Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.78-79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.6, 81-82, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58.
- ¹⁷⁷ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.183.
- ¹⁷⁸ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.15.
- ¹⁷⁹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.50-53, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.78-79, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.58-59.
- ¹⁸⁰ The Sumerian word *me* has an uncertain meaning, though it is generally understood as rules and regulations created by various leading deities and assigned to each cosmic entity and cultural phenomenon. The purpose of each *me* is to keep its universal and immutable rules operating forever without conflict and confusion. Both the gods and humans had to observe the *me*'s. Kramer, *The Sumerians*, pp.115-116 and Wolkstein and Kramer, *Inanna*, p.123.
- ¹⁸¹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.52-53, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.78-79, 61, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.39.
- ¹⁸² Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p.61, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.64, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.39.
- ¹⁸³ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 2*, pp.417-418.
- ¹⁸⁴ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.51-53, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.61-62, 78-79, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.39-40.
- ¹⁸⁵ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.51-53 and Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.78-79.
- ¹⁸⁶ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.8, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.51-53, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.63-66, 78-79, 83, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.40.
- ¹⁸⁷ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.8, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.51-53, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.240-241, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.59, 63-66, 78-79, 83, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.60, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.40.
- ¹⁸⁸ It would appear that originally Amau-shumgal-ana and Dumuzi were separate gods, but became fused over the years in the sacred marriage texts when their names were used interchangeably. The etymology of the name seems to literally read 'Mother Big Snake of the Sky', suggesting the meaning 'the Mother is a Heavenly Dragon', though the title 'Mother' has sometimes been interpreted as a metaphoric title and may mean 'Lord' in this context, e.g., 'Lord Dragon of Heaven'. Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.74.
- ¹⁸⁹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.51-53, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.78-79, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.60, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.40-41.
- ¹⁹⁰ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.8, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.51-53, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.63-66, 78-79, 83, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.75-76, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.60, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.41.
- ¹⁹¹ The *galalkalu* were cultic singers and musicians, closely associated with the *nar*, and in origin they may have been interchangeable titles for the same cultic office. Their regular duty was to recite the *balag* (lament or wailing) hymns in order to assuage divine anger, though they also chanted the sacred marriage liturgy. Their *balag* songs are written in Emesal, also known as 'women's language', which may be a dialect of Sumerian or a literary genre and style, though it is disputed amongst scholars. Emesal was used for lamentation texts, Inanna's speeches in various myths, and for love songs like the sacred marriage liturgy. In the earliest records there were both male and female *gala*-chanters. They could marry and have children. However, over time, the *gala* office became strictly reserved for men, at which point the office of *nar* became more defined; it was still composed of male and female cultic singers, though they were now known as *naru* (m.) and *nartu* (f.). At this point it seems that the *gala* began to have an irregular sexual nature. Scholars dispute the identity of these later male *kalu*, saying that they may have been eunuchs, homosexuals, pederasts, and/or transvestites, though they could still marry and have children. This irregular sexual nature was perhaps due in part to the *kalu*'s usage of the Emesal language, which has strong connection to the female sphere. Though the castration of the male *kalu* is greatly disputed, it seems

likely that they did wear women's cultic attire while performing their religious duties in order to imitate women, which may point to the origin of the *gala* as a woman's office. Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.88-89, 96 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.159-160.

¹⁹² Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.52-53 and Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.59-60.

¹⁹³ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.50-51 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.58-59.

¹⁹⁴ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.53.

¹⁹⁵ The sacred *gipar* was originally a simple reed hut where grains and fruits from the harvest were stored. Over time the *gipar* became the temple's storehouse and threshing floor. It developed into a complex building that included sacred chambers and the living quarters of the *en* priest/priestess and his/her attendants. Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.34, 56, 115, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.63, 65, and Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess*, p.119.

¹⁹⁶ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.50-51 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.58-59. Nissen discussed in Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.58-59.

¹⁹⁷ Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.40.

¹⁹⁸ Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.42.

¹⁹⁹ Doty, *Mythography*, p.177, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.5-6, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.59, 62, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.59-60, 62, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.6-7, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.48-49.

²⁰⁰ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.296, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.12, 14, 22, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.51, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.153, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p.79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.69-72, 76-77, 243, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.60-61.

²⁰¹ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.296, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.12, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.51, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p.79, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.69, 71-72, 76-77, 243.

²⁰² Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.296, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.12, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.51, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p.79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.69, 71-72, 76, 243, Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.44-45, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitute', p.3.

²⁰³ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.296, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.12, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.51, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p.79, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.69, 71-72, 77, 243.

²⁰⁴ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.14, 69, 71-72, 75-77, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.57. Hallo and Jacobsen discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.69, Kraus discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.72, Leick discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.71-72, and Steinkeller discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.71.

²⁰⁵ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.29, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.12, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.76, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.71, 75, 82. Leick discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.71.

²⁰⁶ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.71-72, 75, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.57. Steinkeller discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.71.

²⁰⁷ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.12, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.76, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.71-72, 75, 82, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.57. Steinkeller discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.71.

²⁰⁸ We have countless ritual records from Mesopotamia and Egypt on how to ritually infuse a statue so that it represents a specific god. In Mesopotamia, the ritual is called *mis pi*, and it is used to 'give birth' to the god represented by the cult image where the 'spirit in matter' keeps the sacred statue 'alive'. Dick, *Born in Heaven Made on Earth*, p.vii-viii.

²⁰⁹ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.29, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.12, 22, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.51-53,

76, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.14, 69-72, 75-77, 82, 84, 243, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.57. Bottero discussed in Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.12.

²¹⁰ The passage of 2Kgs 23:4-7 literally refers to women weaving in the tent of the *qedeshim* (holy/set apart ones). The word *qedeshim* is masculine plural, however, in Hebrew, the masculine plural can and often does include the feminine. In this passage I understand these women as belonging to the group of *qedeshim*, in essence female *qedeshim*, or in proper Hebrew feminine plural, *qedeshot*. It seems only normal that female *qedeshim* would be in the tent of the *qedeshim* ritually making sacred garments for the statue of the goddess Asherah. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.73.

²¹¹ 2Kgs 23:4-7.

²¹² Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.206-213, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.70, Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.45, 81, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.256-257, 260. Renger discussed in Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.257.

²¹³ Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p.101.

²¹⁴ The Greek term 'hierodule' is misleading, for it literally means 'sacred slave', and this is definitely not what is meant by the text. It would be more accurate to translate it as priestess. I thank Johanna Stuckey to having brought this to my attention.

²¹⁵ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.51, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.207, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.70, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.45.

²¹⁶ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.240.

²¹⁷ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.18, 193, 232, 240, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.13, note76, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.45, 81.

²¹⁸ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.42, 51, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.193, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.13, 69, 71, 77, 243, Leon, *Uppity Women of Ancient Times*, p.16, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.45. Kramer discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.69.

²¹⁹ Two precious necklaces were found in the temple of Eanna's inner courtyard in Uruk. One is inscribed with the words 'Kubatum, the beloved *lukur* of Shu-Sin', proving this relationship, while the other, also dedicated by Shu-Sin, but this time to the *lukur* named Tiamat-bashti. Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.42, 51, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.193, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.48, 69, 71, 77, 243, Leon, *Uppity Women of Ancient Times*, p.16, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.45-46.

²²⁰ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.193 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.13, note76. Jacobsen and Steinkeller discussed in Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.193 and Leick discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.13, note76.

²²¹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.42, 51, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.193, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.69, 71, 77, 243, and Leon, *Uppity Women of Ancient Times*, p.16.

²²² Henshaw, *Female and Male: the Cultic Personnel*, p.52 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.69-70. Alster discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.69-70.

²²³ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.12-13, 18-19. Renger discussed in Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.12.

²²⁴ Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58. Woolley discussed in Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58.

²²⁵ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, p.225 and Herodotus, *Histories*, I, 181-182.

²²⁶ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.14, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.9, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.57. Weadock and Woolley discussed in Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58.

²²⁷ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.14, 22, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.153, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.6, 70, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.60-61, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitute', p.3.

²²⁸ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.12-13, 18-19.

²²⁹ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.14, 19, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.9, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.10, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitute', p.3.

²³⁰ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.14, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.9, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.10, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitute', pp.3-4.

²³¹ Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.40-42.

²³² Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.41, 55.

²³³ Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p.41.

²³⁴ Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p.23.

²³⁵ Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.40-41.

²³⁶ Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.65 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.149, 151.

²³⁷ Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.62 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.149-150, 152.

²³⁸ Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.65 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p.153.

²³⁹ Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', pp.60, 65 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.149, 152-153.

²⁴⁰ Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.60 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.152-153. Ahmoses Nefertari married her brother Amenhotep I (1546-1526 BCE), and transferred her title to her daughter Meritamun. It then passed over Ahmes, chief wife of Amenhotep's successor Thutmose I (1525-1512 BCE), perhaps because she may have been Meritamun's sister, so that Hatshepsut, daughter of Thutmose I, became the next 'god's wife'. Both Ahmoses Nefertari and Hatshepsut often used it as their sole title in preference to 'king's principal wife'. Because the religious and political spheres were not divided in ancient Egypt, Hatshepsut, after her widowhood and during her regency for the under aged king Thutmose III (1504-1450 BCE), preferred the title of 'god's wife'. Using this priestly office's authority, she gathered support and build up her political power for her eventual claim to the throne, becoming pharaoh and coregent with her stepson/nephew. Since 'god's wife' was an office incompatible with kingship, she handed it over to her daughter by Thutmose II (1512-1504 BCE), princess Neferura. (Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.62 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.149-150, 152) Thutmose III seems to purposely have reduced the office's value, for after Thutmose IV (1425-1417 BCE), there is only one nameless 'god's wife' depicted in the temple of Amenhotep III at Luxor. After Amenhotep III (1417-1379 BCE), the office was apparently abandoned by the royal family; for the rest of the 18th Dynasty, none of the last six kings' chief wives – Tiye, Nefertiti, Meritaten, Ankhesenamen, Tiy, and Mutnodjmet – are recorded as having the 'god's wife' title. (Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.63 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.150, 152.) The 'god's wife' reappeared in 19th Dynasty (1320-1200 BCE) New Kingdom royal family titles, continuing through the 20th (1200-1085 BCE), but never regained its previous prestige. Treated as just one of many titles, and carrying little discernible importance, it was rarely used in royal titularies and seldom alone. Aset, daughter of Ramses VI, was installed as 'god's wife' during his reign; she was called 'king's daughter, divine adoratrice, god's wife'. Unlike most of her precursors, there is no evidence that she ever married, perhaps making her the first celibate 'god's wife'. This might have become the practice of the subsequent dynasties, for her successors, selected by adoption, were all unwed daughters of either kings or high-priests of the god Amun. (Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.63 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, pp.152-154.) At the end of the 20th Dynasty, the New Kingdom collapsed, and the country became administratively divided in half. Subsequent dynasties ruled from the Delta in the north, while the chief priest of Amun governed from Waset (Thebes) in the south. Thus, during the 21st Dynasty (1089-945 BCE), the role of 'god's wife' became politicized, for the kings used the office to maintain some authority at Thebes. The 'god's wife', established in her powerful sacerdotal capacity at the Amun cult centre, was the loyal daughter of the king her father, which allowed for some political stability, inasmuch as she preserve her father's interests over the south. (Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.65 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p.154.) Since she could not establish her own Dynasty, because of her celibacy, when she died, the reigning king's daughter could succeed. This arrangement continued through the 23rd (818-793 BCE) and 24th (727-715 BCE) dynasties until Egypt's

subsequent conquest by the Nubian kings (780-656 BCE) and beyond. (Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.65 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p.154.) The rulers of Kush/Nubia began to extend their authority into Egypt at the end of the Third Intermediate Period. King Kashta, upon reaching Waset/Thebes, persuaded the serving 'god's wife', Shepenwepet I (daughter of Pharaoh Osorkon III/IV of the 23rd-24th Dynasty), to adopt as her heir his own daughter, Amenirdis. However, Psamtek I (664-610 BCE), king of Sais in the Delta and founder of the 26th Dynasty (664-525 BCE), secured Thebes by driving Tanutamani, the last Nubian king to rule Egypt, beyond the First Cataract. In turn, to secure his position in the south, Psamtek persuaded the Nubian 'god's wife' Amenirdis II, through intense negotiations, to adopt his eldest daughter, Nitiquet, as her heir. A stele, recording Nitiquet's installation, includes all the property and endowments that she brought with her, giving us an idea of how wealthy the institution of 'god's wife' had become. It also shows the political power that the office had; through it the allegiance of Thebes was peacefully changed from the 25th to the 26th Dynasty. (Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.65 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p.154.) Nitiquet adopted Ankhnesneferibre, daughter of Psamtek II, as her successor. Ankhnesneferibre, once removed from office, became the wife of the next king, Ahmoses II. When the Persian conquered Egypt, they brought the 26th Dynasty to an end and the office of the 'god's wife of Amun' along with it. Male officials, foremost of whom were the stewards, had been administering the domain of the 'god's wife' all this time. (Forbes, 'God's Wives of Amen; The Divine Adoratrixes', p.65 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p.156.)

²⁴¹ The word *shiwanzanni* means 'mother of god'. Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, p.226.

²⁴² Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.386, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.65, Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, p.96, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Volume 1, p.118, and Gurney, *The Hittites*, pp.53-54. Andreasen discussed in Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.386.

²⁴³ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.386, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.65, and Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, p.96. Bin-Nun discussed in Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.386.

²⁴⁴ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.65, Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, p.96, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Volume 1, p.118, and Gurney, *The Hittites*, pp.53-54.

²⁴⁵ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.387, note 7, Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', p.24, note 11, and Gurney, *The Hittites*, p.54. Donner discussed in Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', p.24, note 11.

²⁴⁶ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Volume 1, p.118 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.104.

²⁴⁷ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.140 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.104.

²⁴⁸ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.69.

²⁴⁹ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.69 and Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.66.

²⁵⁰ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.12, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.76, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.82 note 284.

²⁵¹ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.12, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.76, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.82 note 284.

²⁵² Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.77, 245.

²⁵³ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.95, 100.

²⁵⁴ Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.245.

²⁵⁵ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.18, 207 and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.255, 257.

²⁵⁶ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.48 and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.258-260.

²⁵⁷ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.202 and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.258-260.

²⁵⁸ Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.256-257, 260.

²⁵⁹ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.207, Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitutes', p.3, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', pp.9-10, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.255, 257.

- ²⁶⁰ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.193, 207 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.13, note76.
- ²⁶¹ It is possible that a *qedeshah*, chosen from the king's harem, performed the sacred marriage rite with the king in hopes of becoming the next *gevirah* by giving birth to the heir to the throne.
- ²⁶² These classes stood in opposition to the classes of women who were not regulated by the codes; the *harimtu* (usually translated as prostitute), the *shamhatu* [see Shamhat in Gilgamesh], and the *kezertu*, each had an unregulated sexuality and had a special relationship to a female deity. (Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.251.)
- ²⁶³ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', pp.25, 41, Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p.38, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.9, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitutes', pp.2-3.
- ²⁶⁴ Brooks, 'Some Observations Concerning Ancient Mesopotamian Women', pp.190, 192-194, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Qualls-Corbett, *The Sacred Prostitute*, p.31, Stone, *When God was a Woman*, p.157, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.249, 251-252.
- ²⁶⁵ Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities*, p.234 and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.254.
- ²⁶⁶ Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.253.
- ²⁶⁷ Brooks, 'Some Observations Concerning Ancient Mesopotamian Women', pp.190, 192-194, Stone, *When God was a Woman*, p.157, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.249, 252.
- ²⁶⁸ Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p.15 and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.252-254. In the story of *Atrahasis*, there is an interesting passage in which the goddess Ninhursag, also known as Mamy and Nintu, is described as 'the creator of mankind', where she takes a mixture of blood and clay and impregnates herself. (Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p.15 and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.252-254.) After a period of ten lunar months, she prepared herself to give birth, which she described as follow: "The midwife shall rejoice in the house of the *qadishtu*-priestess. Wherever a woman gives birth and the baby's mother serves herself, the mud brick shall be put down for nine days. Nintu the womb-goddess shall be honoured. She shall call their ... 'Mami'. She shall [] the womb-goddess..." (Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p.17.)
- ²⁶⁹ Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.249.
- ²⁷⁰ Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities*, p.234 and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.254.
- ²⁷¹ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.198 and Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7. Woolley discussed in Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.198.
- ²⁷² Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7.
- ²⁷³ Brooks, 'Some Observations Concerning Ancient Mesopotamian Women', p.192.
- ²⁷⁴ All of these early writers are discussed in Fisher, 'Cultic Prostitution in the Ancient Near East? A Reassessment', p.225, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.225-228, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.2, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitutes', p.1.
- ²⁷⁵ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', pp.23-24, Fisher, 'Cultic Prostitution in the Ancient Near East? A Reassessment', p.226, Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.330-331, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7, Herodotus, *Histories*, I:199, pp.89-90, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', pp.1-2, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitutes', p.1.
- ²⁷⁶ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.31, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.225-226, and Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.10.
- ²⁷⁷ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', pp.30-31 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.12-13. Alster discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.12 and Leick discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.13.
- ²⁷⁸ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.12-13. Jacobsen and Leick discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.12-13.
- ²⁷⁹ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.12-13, 243 and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, pp.18, 21-29.
- ²⁸⁰ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.3, 12.

- ²⁸¹ Bell, *Ritual*, p.18, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.224-225, Doty, *Mythography*, p.157, Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.296, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.6, Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.139-146, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.50, 55-56, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7, Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp.212-213, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 43, 49, 79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.3, 7, 77, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58, 61.
- ²⁸² There are a few Mesopotamian texts expressing a fear of overpopulation, like *Atrahasis* (c. 1700 BCE), which clearly states this concern as the cause of the Flood. One of the solutions, post-diluvian, aside from having barren women, was to have certain classes of priestesses forced to remain childless (*Atrahasis* III vii 6-9 in Dalley, *Myths From Mesopotamia*, p.35). However, human fertility was still a concern in Mesopotamia. We have laws stating that a wife can be pressured to provide a minimum of one child to her husband; otherwise she may be reduced to second-wife or even end up in divorce. This would be one of the reasons why a childless woman would use fertility magic, which was usually found at local sanctuaries, for it did not seem to be a major cultural force in Mesopotamia. Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', pp.26-27.
- ²⁸³ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.27, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.224-225, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.6, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.55, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.48, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7, Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp.212-213, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 43, 49, 57, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.3, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58, 61.
- ²⁸⁴ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.224-225, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.6, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.55, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.48, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7, Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp.212-213, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 43, 49, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.3, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58, 61.
- ²⁸⁵ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.92 and Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.50, 56.
- ²⁸⁶ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.92 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.11-12, 14. Steinkeller discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.11-12.
- ²⁸⁷ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.224-225, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.6, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.55, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.48, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7, Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp.212-213, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 43, 49, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.3, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58, 61.
- ²⁸⁸ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.92, Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.299, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.50, 55-56, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.5, 11.
- ²⁸⁹ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.299, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.56, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.5, 11.
- ²⁹⁰ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.299, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.55-56, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.48, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.5, 11.
- ²⁹¹ According to Archaeological records found to date, the institution of the *en* priesthood appeared near the end of the 4th millennium BCE, preceding the appearance of the word *lugal* (king) by about a thousand years, which occurred in 2700 BCE. Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.33-34.
- ²⁹² Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.299, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.55-56, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.48, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.5, 11.
- ²⁹³ Bell, *Ritual*, p.18, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.224-225, Doty, *Mythography*, p.157, Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.296, 299, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.6, Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.139-146, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.55-56, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.48, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7, Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp.212-213, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 43, 49, 79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.3, 5, 7, 11, 77, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58, 61.
- ²⁹⁴ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.92 and Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.50, 56.
- ²⁹⁵ Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.35.

²⁹⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, p.18, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.224-225, Doty, *Mythography*, p.157, Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.296, 299, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.6, Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.139-146, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.55-56, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.48, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7, Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp.212-213, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 43, 49, 79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.3, 5, 7, 11, 77, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58, 61.

²⁹⁷ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.299, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.55-56, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.5, 11. Cooper and Steinkeller discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.11.

²⁹⁸ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.295, 297, 299.

²⁹⁹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.52, 54 and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.34. A similar thing happens in *The Iliad* when Zeus and Hera unite in lovemaking. "... the son of Kronos clasped his consort in his arms. And beneath them the divine earth sent forth fresh new grass, and dewy lotus, and crocus, and hyacinth, thick and soft, that raised them aloft from the ground. Therein they lay, and were clad on with a fair golden cloud, whence fell drops of glittering dew (Book XIV, 292-298)." (Homer, *The Iliad*, p.198)

³⁰⁰ The mention of progeny and heirs seem a later development, when the sacred marriage became more of a royal celebration (as discuss in the chapter entitled 'Coronation Festival'). In these texts discussing impregnation, the focus is on the male deity. Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.25.

³⁰¹ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.25, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.54-55, 92, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.61-62, and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.191-192.

³⁰² Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.23, 26, 84, and May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.79.

³⁰³ Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.23, 26, 84.

³⁰⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, p.18, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.224-225, Doty, *Mythography*, p.157, Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.296, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.6, Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.26, 48-49, 84, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp.212-213, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.43, 49, 79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.77, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.57. Here should be noted the substitute-king practice in Mesopotamia, where, on specific occasions and in exceptional cases, a substitute-king was allowed to briefly rule and was then sacrificed, after which the king returned to his status. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.263-265.

³⁰⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, p.18, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.224-225, Doty, *Mythography*, p.157, Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.296, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.6, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp.212-213, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.43, 49, 79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.77, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.57, and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.47.

³⁰⁶ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.297-298 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.11. Steinkeller discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.11. Three Neo-Assyrian letters from the Kouyunjik archive in Kalhu (Calah), dating to the time of Esarhaddon (680-669 BCE) and Ashurbanipal (668-627 BCE), allude to the sacred marriage rite of Nabu and Tashmetu. One of these letters was written specifically for Ashurbanipal by one of Nabu's temple administrator (*hazannu*). (Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.11 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.83.) It deals with the *glqurshu*-ceremony. Nabu, ready to be married on the ritual's 2nd day, dressed himself in the garment of supreme divinity, while his bed was prepared for the wedding. He then proceeded from his temple, the Ezida (in Borsippa), to the Ehurshaba temple, the divine Lady's shrine. Like Nanna-Suen/Sin, he entered the bedroom and brought light to the darkness of the temple. There, the divine couple lay down in sweet sleep on the bed. On the 3rd and the 4th day of the Babylonian month of Ayyaru (April-May), the sacred wedding ritual of Nabu and Nanaya was performed for the life of the king's son. On the 5th day, Bel/Marduk and Nabu blessed the king's son's life and prolonged the king's reign. On the 6th day, Nabu came out of the palace's *adru* ('threshing floor') and went out to the garden to offer sacrifices. The chief of the stables took the god for a tour of the garden and brought him back inside the temple. Anyone who had only one *qa* of bread, including the apprentice-scribes, offered it in sacrifice in the Nabu temple and ate. (Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.83, 87.) On the 7th day, Nabu went to 'the house of

collected divine powers', Emeurur, in Anu's temple of Eanna in Uruk. He then proceeded to Anu's garden and received the supreme divine kingship. While Nabu dressed in the palm tree's *himshatu* (branch leaves) and put on Anu's crown, the *ashipu*, a physician/diviner, recited an incantation. The rest of the tablet is broken. (Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.87.)

³⁰⁷ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.4, 78-79, 245. Jacobsen discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.4.

³⁰⁸ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.78-79, 245.

³⁰⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, p.18, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.224-225, Doty, *Mythography*, p.157, Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.296, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.5-6, Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.139-146, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.55, 59, 62, 92, 237, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.135, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7, Kramer, *History Begins at Sumer*, pp.212-213, Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.18, 43, 49, 79, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.3, 6-7, 14, 77, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.57-58, 61.

³¹⁰ Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.57-58 and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.48.

³¹¹ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.28, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.5-6, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.59, 62, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.6.

³¹² Enlil-bani, 'he who produces abundance of grain'; Lipit-Ishtar, chosen by Anu, Enlil, and Ninlil 'so that there should be a wealth of grain in Isin'; Idin-Dagan, charged by Enlil with 'the task of feeding the people with excellent food and of making them drink sweet water'; and so forth. (Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.299.)

³¹³ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.28, Doty, *Mythography*, p.177, Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.295, 297, 299, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.5-6, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.59, 62, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.6-7. Kraus discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.6-7.

³¹⁴ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p.39, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.5-6, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.59, 62, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.6.

³¹⁵ Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.128 and Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, pp.62-63.

³¹⁶ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.237, note 5 and Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p.79.

³¹⁷ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.54.

³¹⁸ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.225-226, Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.295, 297, 299, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.5-6, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.59, 62, 237, Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.78-79, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.6. Van Buren discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.6.

³¹⁹ Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.225-226, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.59, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.6.

³²⁰ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.295, 297, 299.

³²¹ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p.39, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.60, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.8. Hallo discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.8.

³²² Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.60. Anat and Asherah, who are referred to in Ugaritic poem as 'the two wet-nurses of the gods [and princes]', may also have performed this function as validating the crown prince's claim to the throne; a role perhaps made famous by the Egyptian goddess Isis who suckled her son Horus to prove that he was the legitimate heir to his father Osiris' throne. Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.37.

³²³ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.297-298.

³²⁴ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.297-299.

³²⁵ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.299.

³²⁶ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.295, 297-299.

³²⁷ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, pp.295-299, Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.8, and Kramer, *The Sacred Marriage Rite*, p.63.

³²⁸ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.10.

- ³²⁹ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.10 and Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.56.
- ³³⁰ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.92, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.50, 55-56, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.88.
- ³³¹ "First, here is the order of rites of consecration for Catholic virgins, according to the Roman Pontifical: The virgins are brought in dressed in the novice's habit 'without veils, robes, or hoods'. ... They stand up in a circle, and each one comes and promises [the bishop]... to consecrate herself to virginity. He asks them if they are willing 'to be blessed, consecrated, and united as spouses to Our Lord Jesus Christ', and they reply, 'We wish it'. ... They take off their usual habits and put on the others. He blesses the veils, then the rings, then the coronets. The virgins chant: 'I have renounced the worldly kingdom and all the attractions of the world – my heart is no longer free, for I am in the service of the King, Him whom I have seen.' The bishop prays and then recites the *Vere Dignum*; he replaces his miter and says, 'Come, beloved soul, you are close to my throne; the King has sought your union.' They come forward, two by two, kneel, and 'the bishop places the veil on the head of each one, ... saying: 'Receive the sacred veil as proof that you have renounced the world and that ... you have become ... the spouse of Jesus Christ.' When all are veiled, he reminds them, 'Come to celebrate your wedding, etc.,' and he places the ring on the third finger of the right hand, saying, 'I unite you, etc.' The same ceremony is performed with the coronet. There are liturgical chants, prayers, the alleluia, communion, benediction, [etc]... Finally, the consecrated virgins are placed under the charge of the abbess. The ideas expressed include a separation from the profane world through the changing of habit and veiling, and an incorporation into the holy world by a marriage with Jesus Christ, the ring and the coronet also being ritual objects of secular marriage. It will be observed that the rites of separation here end the transitional period (the novitiate), which is characterized by a semi-seclusion, that a complete seclusion follows the consecration, and that both novitiate and consecration are accompanied by a physical separation (convent, railing, etc.) from the profane world." Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.98-100.
- ³³² Similarly, the Eden tale also secured fertility for Eve ('you will bear children' (Gen 3:16) and 'mother of the living' (Gen 3:20)).
- ³³³ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.20-21, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.92, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.243, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.91, 98, 169-170. Westermarck discussed in Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.170.
- ³³⁴ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.21-22 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.9.
- ³³⁵ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.14-15, 17-18 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62.
- ³³⁶ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.20-21, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.243, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.98.
- ³³⁷ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.100.
- ³³⁸ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.20-21, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.72, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62. However, another explanation claims that this peculiar usage is the so-called *erotic plural* or the *plural of ecstasy*.
- ³³⁹ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.20-21 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62.
- ³⁴⁰ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.34, 56, 115 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.63, 65.
- ³⁴¹ Since Israel had to cope with the deadly dry seasons and the drought years, it was also dependent on storage. The principal storage was attached to the Temple (1Kgs 6:6), though, aside from that, there seems to be no hint of divine involvement in the Israelite storage system. It should however be recalled that the Jerusalem Temple was built on a threshing floor (2Sam 24:18-25). Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.34, 56, 115, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.63, 65, and Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess*, p.119. Hallo and van Dijk discussed in Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.63.
- ³⁴² Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.34-36, 56, 115 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.63, 65.
- ³⁴³ Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.64.

- ³⁴⁴ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.17-18, 20-21 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62.
- ³⁴⁵ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.17-18.
- ³⁴⁶ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.20-21 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62.
- ³⁴⁷ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.13, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.138, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.7, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62, Sjöö and Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother*, p.159, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.91, 169-170.
- ³⁴⁸ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.197-198 and Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.297.
- ³⁴⁹ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, p.297 and Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.57.
- ³⁵⁰ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.13, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.62, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.91, 169-170.
- ³⁵¹ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.8-9.
- ³⁵² Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.15.
- ³⁵³ Chernin, *Reinventing Eve*, p.xx. Olsen discussed in Chernin, *Reinventing Eve*, p.xx.
- ³⁵⁴ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.138, 143, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.63, and Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess*, p.83.
- ³⁵⁵ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.22, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.153, Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.60-61, and Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess*, p.83. Cf. *Atrahasis*: III vii 6-9 in Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, p.35.
- ³⁵⁶ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.22, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.153, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.7, 10, May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.86, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.60-61. Hallo discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.7.
- ³⁵⁷ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.22, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.153, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.7, 10, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.60-61. Cooper, Hallo, and Klein discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.7.
- ³⁵⁸ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.22, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.153, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.10, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.60-61. Hall, Jacobsen, and Weadock discussed in Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.61.
- ³⁵⁹ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.22, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.153, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.10, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.60-61.
- ³⁶⁰ Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p.38.
- ³⁶¹ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.22, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.153, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.7, 69, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.60-61.
- ³⁶² Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', p.22, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.153, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.7, May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.86, and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, pp.60-61.
- ³⁶³ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.7.
- ³⁶⁴ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.7 note 27. Hallo discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.7.
- ³⁶⁵ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.56 and Meador, *Inanna, Lady of the Largest Heart*, p.63.

B. The Judahite Sacred Marriage Rite:

- ³⁶⁶ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.42, 44-45.
- ³⁶⁷ Though there is evidence of Cybele to have originated in pre-Hittite religion under the name Kubaba, her worship spread the whole of the Near East from Turkey to Arabia. She entered the Greek world and became known as Kybele during the Hellenistic period, when the Phrygians ruled Anatolia. It is also at this time that she became linked to Attis. Her cult, now linked to that of Attis, was brought to Rome and spread throughout the Roman Empire. According to the myth of Attis and Cybele, though the young

prince pledged his love to the Goddess, he nonetheless had an affair with a nymph. Cybele discovered the treason, killed the nymph, and instilled madness in Attis. The maddened youth ran into the woods, laid under a pine-tree, castrated himself, and bled to death. The Mysteries of Attis began on the 15th of March, during which time there was a period of fasting and abstinence. In the rite, a pine-tree was ritually cut down from the Goddess' sacred grove, near her temple, on March 22nd, and was set up in the temple. The pine-tree was bandaged with ribbons like a mummy and garlands of violets, Attis' sacred flower that sprung from his blood, were hung on the tree. An effigy of the God was also attached to the tree, clearly identifying the pine-tree as Attis. This icon was to be kept for a year. The God's worshipers mourned Attis' death with various rites. March 24th was the Day of Blood, where the old pine-tree representing Attis, ritually cut and decorated the previous year, was ceremoniously burned and the ashes were put in an urn which was then laid in the God's grave. On March 25th was the feast of Hilaria, the Festival of Joy, marking the last day of the ritual, which celebrated the resurrection of the god Attis. Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.391-415, Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p.93, Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.347-356, and Ovid, *Fasti*, pp.87-93.

³⁶⁸ According to a version of the myth of Isis and Osiris, Seth was jealous of his brother Osiris, the first king of Egypt, who had gone throughout the land of Egypt to teach agriculture to his people. Osiris was welcomed back to the palace by a great feast organized by his brother Seth. For the occasion, Seth had a richly adorned chest made to give as a prize to whoever would fit perfectly in it. Of course it was made to fit the proportion of the perfect god, Osiris. When Osiris lay inside, the lid was close and quickly nailed and sealed, after which it was thrown into the Nile and it floated out into the Mediterranean Sea. The chest reached the shores of Byblos where it was caught in the branched of an erica-tree, which instantly grew into a big tree to fully enclose the chest within its bough. Seeing the strength and splendour of the erica-tree, Melqart, the king of Byblos, had the tree cut down and made into the central pillar of his palace. Mourning for her lost love, Isis wandered the world and found herself in Byblos. Astarte, the queen of Byblos, took Isis in and made her the nurse of her child. After a while Isis revealed herself as a goddess to the king and queen of Byblos and claimed the central column of the palace. She took it down, cut away the wood of the erica-tree and revealed Osiris' sarcophagus hidden inside. Isis then ritually wrapped the erica-tree pillar in fine linen and anointed it with unguents. The mummified tree-trunk was returned to the king and queen of Byblos who installed it in the temple to be worshiped. Isis then took the sarcophagus and returned to Egypt. Once there, she opened the sealed chest and in the form of a bird she flapped her wings and brought Osiris back to life. The ritual is said to have made the use of a pine-tree, which was ritually cut down and hollowed out. Inside the emptied centre of the tree trunk was placed an icon of the god Osiris. This sacred pole was kept for a year and then ceremoniously burnt and buried to be replaced by a new pole. Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.225-244, Budge, *Osiris & the Egyptian Resurrection*, Volume 1, pp.1-23, Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p.92, and Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.362-385.

³⁶⁹ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.45.

³⁷⁰ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.44, 48, 95, 192 and Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.19, 23-24.

³⁷¹ Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.25 and Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.42, 45-46. Belief in the sacred tree's wonderful powers long predated the Genesis story, though the similarity ascribed to its powers and context cannot fail but to strike us. Though the fruit of knowledge and the fruit of immortality grew on separate trees in the Garden of Eden, in the very earliest religious poems, sacred texts, and ancient hymns, such as the *Hymn of Eridu*, both these gifts are more often the fruit of the one tree that 'grows in the midst of the garden' or in the 'central place of the earth'. Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.496, 498, Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.7, Cook, *The Tree of Life*, pp.76, 121, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.46, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.225, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, pp.102-103, 129-130, 171.

³⁷² Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p.171, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.44, 48, 95, and Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', pp.34-35.

³⁷³ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.43, Maier, 'Asherah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.199, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.20, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.100.

³⁷⁴ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.43-44, Leick, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, pp.4, 14, 16 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.100-101.

- ³⁷⁵ Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*, p.181, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.44-45, 49, Leick, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, pp.4, 14, 16, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.200, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.100-101.
- ³⁷⁶ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.13.
- ³⁷⁷ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.51.
- ³⁷⁸ Leick, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, pp.4, 14, 16, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.199-200, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.100-101.
- ³⁷⁹ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.13, 44, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.199-200, Teubal, *Ancient Sisterhood*, p.109, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.100-101.
- ³⁸⁰ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.44, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.20, and Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.36.
- ³⁸¹ Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.101.
- ³⁸² Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.44, Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, Volume II, pp.29-30, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.101.
- ³⁸³ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.51-52, Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.30, and Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, Volume II, pp.29-30.
- ³⁸⁴ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.83, 147, Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.66, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.38, 45, 49, 206, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.74, Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.29, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.19, 23, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.30-31, Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.37, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.99.
- ³⁸⁵ Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, p.189, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.83, 147, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.206, Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.29, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.19, Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.33-35, 41-43, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.31.
- ³⁸⁶ Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.20 and Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.36.
- ³⁸⁷ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.39, 43, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.74, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.175, Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.37, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.99-100. There is also evidence that Athirat was considered a mother in the personal name 'Athirat-is-my-mother'. Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.20.
- ³⁸⁸ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.69, Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.66, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.43, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.74, Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.20, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.43, Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.37, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.99-100.
- ³⁸⁹ Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.66, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.43, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.74, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.23, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.30-31, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.104.
- ³⁹⁰ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.78-79, note 5 and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.44.
- ³⁹¹ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.78-79, note 5, Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.111, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.39, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.99.

- ³⁹² Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, pp.97-101, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.30, Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', pp.37-38, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.99.
- ³⁹³ Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, pp.53, 63, 67 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.99.
- ³⁹⁴ Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, pp.52-53, 62-63 and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.44
- ³⁹⁵ Brody, 'Each Man Cried Out to his God', p.29, Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.63, Bethyon, 'The Cult of Aserah/Elat at Sidon', pp.53-56, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.49, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.21, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.99.
- ³⁹⁶ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.32, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.21.
- ³⁹⁷ Based on Ashratum's epithet 'Mistress of Fate', Watson suggested that the term *ym* used in Athirat's epithet may not refer to 'sea' (*yam*) but to 'day' (*yom*), and thus he translates the epithet as 'she who determines/organises the Day'. This translation would also present Athirat as having a solar aspect and may identify her as being Shapash, the sun-goddess. Watson discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.40 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.99-100.
- ³⁹⁸ Brody, 'Each Man Cried Out to his God', pp.26-27, Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, pp.97-99, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.39-40, 51, Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.30, and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.195.
- ³⁹⁹ Brody, 'Each Man Cried Out to his God', pp.27-28, 95-97.
- ⁴⁰⁰ Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.195.
- ⁴⁰¹ Brody, 'Each Man Cried Out to his God', p.97. Athirat's connection to the waxing and waning moon symbols may also be linked to her spinning and weaving ability and present her as a goddess of destiny. This may also find support in Ashratum's epithet 'Mistress of Fate'.
- ⁴⁰² Taylor, following Keel's cataloguing of tree-goddesses in the ancient Near East, suggested that there is a connection between the sea and the tree and vegetation in general, because plants need to be watered to be fruitful. She finds evidence of the tree-sea connection on images from the Near East where a tree is depicted with animals around it including fish. Sometimes there is also water at the base or under the tree where the fish swim. On a cylinder seal from Mari, dating to c. 2350-2150 BCE, there appears to be two tree-goddesses wearing a tree as a dress and standing in water. They are flanking a mountain enthroned god. At the base of this mountain-throne are found (snake?) heads gushing water on either side, creating the rivers/lakes/seas in which the tree-goddesses are standing. Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp. 21-22, figures 7-13 and Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', pp.43, 54 figure 5.
- ⁴⁰³ Brody, 'Each Man Cried Out to his God', pp.29, 70 and Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.98.
- ⁴⁰⁴ Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.99, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.9, 45-46, and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.200.
- ⁴⁰⁵ Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.66, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp. 9, 206, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.74, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.23, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.30-31.
- ⁴⁰⁶ Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.93.
- ⁴⁰⁷ However, there are some who argue that Rachmay is another name for Anat or Shapash. The main reason why Anat has been identified as Rachmay is because Anat is also mentioned as one of the 'wet-nurse' goddesses. However there are no texts referring to Anat as Rachmay, nor is Anat identified as one of El's wife or lover. Rachmay is thought to mean 'She of the Womb', which would designate a *dea genatrix*, a goddess of procreation. Rachmay may also metaphorically mean 'the compassionate one', which is equivalent to Ashratum's epithet in Mesopotamia; 'Lady with patient mercy'. Smith proposes that Rachmay should be connected with *racham* as the plural of the Hebrew *ruach* (wind), thus Rachmay could mean 'She of the Winds'. Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, p.204, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.43, Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.20, Smith, *The Early*

History of God, pp.50-51, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.100-101.

⁴⁰⁸ Gen 49 is commonly considered one of the earliest biblical poems, usually understood as dating to the 11th century BCE, and having been incorporated by *J* into her text. (Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p.52, note 32) Gen 49:25-26a appears to proclaim the power of the Israelite god over the area of women's fertility. (Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.97) "The God of your father who helps you, Shaddai who blesses you, with blessings of sky above, blessings of the deep that crouches below, blessings of breasts and womb, blessings of your father." (Gen 49:25-26a) Though he was not the first one, D. N. Freedman proposed that the words 'blessing of the breast and womb' refer to a mother-goddess, implying that Yahweh had a consort, a theory that met with opposition amongst some scholars, like Frymer-Kensky. (Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.246, note 59 and Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', pp.18, 24) I would agree with Freedman, for I think that the first two sentences established who gives the blessing and it names two different deities; El & Shaddai. This type of poetry, echoing in action but referring to two different deities, is present in Canaanite texts from Ugarit. One such example can be found in the Ugaritic *Baal Cycle*: "Why has Baal the Conqueror arrived? Why has the Virgin Anat arrived?" (Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.98) Obviously Baal, a god, is not to be confused with Anat, a goddess, even though the two sentences echo each other. However, this mirror phrasing does indicate the equality of status between the two deities. The four following sentences of the biblical passage may deal with an A-B; B-A type poem, which would pair up the first and last sentence, and the second with the third. Therefore, Gen 49:25-26a could be understood as follow, where the 'God of your father' (i.e. perhaps Yahweh as 'God of the forefathers' (Ex 3:14, 16. 4:5, etc.), though literally El is mentioned here and may even be translated 'El, your father' (Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.24, note 34)), blesses from the sky above, blessings of the fathers, while Shaddai blesses from the deep (i.e. the ocean (*tehom*) under the earth?), blessing the breast and the womb. However, Gen 49:26a is highly ambiguous, the passage is corrupt and the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. In addition, based on the *Septuagint*, it has been proposed that the verse should be reconstructed as saying 'blessings of father and mother'. (Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.25) Elsewhere in the Bible, 'Shaddai' usually has 'El' in front of it, therefore referring to El-Shaddai. This enigmatic epithet is also the most frequent of the biblical epithets (occurring 48 times in the Hebrew Bible) after Yahweh and Elohim, being the primary designation of the Patriarchal deity in the late Priestly tradition, though rooted, at the same time, in very old poetic tradition. (Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p.52 and Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.15) This title is also found in Canaanite texts as one of the epithets of the god El. (Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p.59) The identity of the sibilant in *shadday*, older *shaddayyu*, has been a chief problem, though W. F. Albright persuasively showed that the ancient meaning may derive from a root *tdwly* meaning 'breast', Arabic *tdy*, Hebrew *shad/shadayim*, Ugaritic *td* and perhaps *dd*, Aramaic *tedayya*, and so on. (Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.52, 55 and Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', pp.16-17) *Shdy* may also be a loanword equivalent to the Hebrew *sdyl/sdh* 'field' or 'steppe'. (Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p.53) Traditionally, the meaning for the epithet Shaddai is 'the One of the Mountain', though, in view of the root *shad*, most likely transparently developed from 'the one of the breast'. (Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p.55 and Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.16) The epithet Shaddai had come to refer to a cosmic mount associated with an earthly mountain where the shrine of the sky-god was located, and therefore refers to 'the One of the Mountain', which is found in the Hurrian hymn as a parallel of El's epithet. (Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p.56) However, the obvious play on words between *shadday* ('the One of the Mountain') and *shadayim* (two breasts) hints at the knowledge of the epithet of El's consort Rachmay/Athirat (I already mentioned the connection of Ashratum and Athirat with *shadem/shadeh*). (Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', pp.24-25) We also can refer to the mythological identification of the sea-goddess Tiamat's breasts as mountains (having gushing springs) in the Babylonian creation account, the *Enuma Elish*. (Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p.56, note 44. For an analysis of Tiamat and her connection to the biblical *tehom*, see Heide, *The Babylonian Genesis*, pp.98-101) Lutzky observed the archaic West Semitic feminine suffix *ay* found in the names of goddesses (Tallay, Pidray, Rachmay, etc.) and noted that their names meant 'she of the (natural phenomenon)', for example; Rachmay = 'She of the Womb' (or 'She of the Winds'). (Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.17 and Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.51) In this way Shaddai, 'She of the breast', would be understood as a *dea nutrix*, a nurturing mother-goddess. In the Canaanite pantheon, Athirat was known as a wet-nurse to gods and princes. Further, the epithet

Shaddai complements well the epithet Rachmay, 'She of the Womb', and if both epithets are indeed titles of Athirat, it would present her as both a *dea nutrix* and a *dea genetrix*. Thus Shaddai and Rachmay, breast and womb, could be translated as titles; Nutrix and Genetrix. (Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', pp.20-21, 25) In fact, the 'breasts and womb' passage (Gen 49:25) is sometimes interpreted as also being an epithet of Asherah, though Smith put more emphasis on analyzing this part of the text and paid little attention to the epithet Shaddai as a goddess title. According to this theory, however, the entire passage from Genesis 49:24c to 49:26a would be a list of divine epithets all in pairs, most of which being composed of a god-goddess dynamic. (Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', pp.24-25 and Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.48-52) Aside for a woman's physiological features blessed by Shaddai found in Gen 49:25-26a, there is further evidence that this deity is a goddess. However, there are a few other places in the Bible, aside from the Genesis passage, where Shaddai is without the El. It would seem that the gender differentiation of Shaddai is determined by being immediately preceded with the word 'El', as in El-Shaddai. Shaddai appears in the Oracles of Balaam (Num 24:4, 16). Unfortunately, the context offers little information as to the gender or actions of this deity, aside from the fact that here, as in Genesis, it is being used in pair with El, perhaps indicating a consort. The Psalms passage (Ps 68:15) may be a little more informative, for the context of the verse (vv. 12-15) does revolve around women's activities while the men are gone to war. In addition, there is mention of the sheepfolds and the dove's wings, associated with Asherah. In Job 29:5-6 there is a clear connection between Shaddai and milk. If Shaddai is indeed a goddess, she is most likely the consort of El, and the context favours Athirat as that goddess. In the Bible, Asherah would be here presented as Yahweh's consort. (Green, *The Storm-God in the Ancient Near East*, p.249 and Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.26) As a lactating *dea nutrix*, Asherah may have come to be represented as a full breasted figurine symbolizing the transmission of divinity or even divine nurturing and protection (Fig 14). (Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', pp.16, 18)

⁴⁰⁹ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.74, Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.20, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.23.

⁴¹⁰ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.45 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.101.

⁴¹¹ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.31, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.200-201, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.101.

⁴¹² Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.200-201.

⁴¹³ Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.97, 99.

⁴¹⁴ Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.20 and Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.129.

⁴¹⁵ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386-398, Betlyon, 'The Cult of Aserah/Elat at Sidon', pp.54-55, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.33-35, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.47, 51, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.100, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, pp.156-157.

⁴¹⁶ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.398, Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, p.25, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.522, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.40-41, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.99, Gunkel, *Genesis*, pp.22-23, Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and Feminist Readings of the Garden of Eden', pp.19, 36, Layton, 'Remarks on the Canaanite Origin of Eve', pp.29-31, Murison, 'The Serpent in the Old Testament', p.118, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, p.71, Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, p.26, note 2, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, p.157.

⁴¹⁷ Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, p.25, Jastrow, 'Adam and Eve in Babylonian Literature', p.209, and Kimelman, *The Seduction of Eve and Feminist Readings of the Garden of Eden*, p.36, note 95.

⁴¹⁸ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.398, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.169, Gunkel, *Genesis*, pp.22-23, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, p.71, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, pp.157-158. See also Labowitz, *God, Sex, and Women of the Bible*, p.86 and Ryan, 'The Creation (3)', p.1 for other goddesses connected to the name Eve.

⁴¹⁹ Brody, 'Each Man Cried Out to his God', pp.30-32, 66, 70, 100.

⁴²⁰ Brody, 'Each Man Cried Out to his God', p.97.

⁴²¹ Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.153.

⁴²² Brody, 'Each Man Cried Out to his God', pp.102-103.

- ⁴²³ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.41-42 and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.175.
- ⁴²⁴ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.11.
- ⁴²⁵ Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.57-60 and van Over, *Sun Songs*, pp.187-191.
- ⁴²⁶ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386-398, Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pp.121-122, Betlyon, 'The Cult of Aserah/Elat at Sidon', pp.54-55, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.33-35, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, pp.156-157.
- ⁴²⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.396-398, Betlyon, 'The Cult of Aserah/Elat at Sidon', pp.54-55, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.33-35, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.47, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.84, Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, Volume I, fig.129, and Stuckey, 'The "Holy One"', pp.1-6.
- ⁴²⁸ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.396-398, Betlyon, 'The Cult of Aserah/Elat at Sidon', pp.54-55, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.33-35, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.47, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.91-93, Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East*, Volume II, fig.61, and Stuckey, 'The "Holy One"', pp.1-6. For a good overview of the evidence in support of the distinctiveness of Qudshu, Astarte, and Anat, see Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.91-93 and Stuckey, 'The "Holy One"', pp.1-6.
- ⁴²⁹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.396-398, Betlyon, 'The Cult of Aserah/Elat at Sidon', p.55, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.59, 144, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.33-35, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.47, 49, and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.94-95. Pettey is discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.47.
- ⁴³⁰ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.144. Cf. Ishtar and her *ishtaritu* priestesses. Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.213.
- ⁴³¹ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.192.
- ⁴³² Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians; Volume 2*, pp.276, 279-283 and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.85-86.
- ⁴³³ Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.85-86.
- ⁴³⁴ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.59 and Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.48-49. Yamashita discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.48-49.
- ⁴³⁵ Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, pp.99, 104, 116.
- ⁴³⁶ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.59 and Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.48-49.
- ⁴³⁷ Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.100.
- ⁴³⁸ Discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.48.
- ⁴³⁹ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.59 Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.47-49, and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.81-96. Albright and Dijkstra discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.47-49.
- ⁴⁴⁰ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.6, 8-10, 12, 26-27.
- ⁴⁴¹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.158. Wiggins discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.31.
- ⁴⁴² This passage has been greatly debated by scholars and the main concern is attempting to decipher if the mention of the 'prophets of Asherah' was originally in the text when it was composed, or if it was a later addition. Because the 400 prophets are only mentioned in this one verse, most scholars argued that they are a late addition to the text. Hadley mentioned that, if indeed it is a late addition, it may have been a Deuteronomic attempt to discredit Asherah by associating her worship with that of Baal. On the other hand, the *Septuagint* mentioned them again in verse 22. This led a few scholars to conclude that the prophets were originally part of the text and they were only later omitted from verse 22. In this case the question is why the prophets of Asherah are not mentioned again. Patai suggested that since the contest was between the gods Baal and Yahweh, and since the 450 prophets of Baal failed in the challenge proposed by Elijah, only those prophets were slaughtered, while Asherah's prophets were left unharmed. Hence, they were left to continue their worship of Asherah. Further, the *asherah*-pole in the temple of Samaria was not removed during this time. For Patai, this meant that Asherah was not in opposition to Yahweh, but was rather a legitimate part of the religion of Yahweh. Hadley agreed with Patai on this point.

The late 9th/early 8th century BCE inscription from Kuntillet 'Ajrud, mentioning 'Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah' (Fig 13), would seem to support this view. Smith concluded that, whether it was in the early source or a later addition, the passage still attests to the existence of Asherah as a goddess and not merely a cult object. However he goes on and proposes to amend the text by identifying Astarte rather than Asherah as the original name in this passage based on the argument that Asherah was not a goddess at Tyre where Jezebel was from. Only later would the name have been changed to identify Asherah as a polemic tactic against the goddess or her cult object. On the reverse, Rendsburg proposed that the Canaanite god El is often referred to by the name Baal in the Hebrew Bible (for example Baal-Hammon and Baal-Shamem which should be identified as the Ugaritic El) and therefore should not be confused with Baal-Hadad the storm-god. According to his argument, the pairing of Asherah with Baal by the Deuteronomist was not a polemical attempt to vilify the goddess by pairing her with a god that was an obvious rival of Yahwism, though not her consort. Rather, this Baal was indeed El. Therefore, it would only be normal to have the prophets of Asherah present alongside the prophets of Baal who was truly El. Hence the mention of the goddess' prophets in the text was original and not a later addition. However Rendsburg fails to account for the fact that the god mentioned here is definitely Baal-Hadad, the storm-god, since the entire purpose of the contest on Mount Carmel which god could bring about a storm. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.66-68, 78, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.40-41, Rendsburg, 'The Mock of Baal in 1Kings 18:27', p.417, Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.xxxiii, 110, 126-127 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.102.

⁴⁴³ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.55, 63-74.

⁴⁴⁴ Frevel discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.34.

⁴⁴⁵ Bernhardt and Wiggins discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.10, 31.

⁴⁴⁶ Day discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.10.

⁴⁴⁷ Frevel discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.34.

⁴⁴⁸ Wiggins discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.31.

⁴⁴⁹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.94.

⁴⁵⁰ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.95, 97.

⁴⁵¹ Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, p.210. This date for the P source would be the earliest dating, for P has been identified not as an individual author, but rather as a school and P's redaction and addition to the Bible seems to span several centuries from around the fall of the Northern kingdom till after the Exile. Speiser, *Genesis*, p.xxvi.

⁴⁵² Carol Meyers spends an entire chapter in her book *Discovering Eve* discussing the farming environment of the early Israelites and their concerns both based on archaeological findings and biblical texts. Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, pp.47-71. See also Naidoff, 'A Man to Work the Soil: A New Interpretation of Genesis 2-3', pp.2-14 and Stordalen, 'Man, Soil, Garden: Basic Plot in Genesis 2-3 Reconsidered', pp.3-26 for an analysis of the Garden story and its connection to agricultural concerns.

⁴⁵³ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.80-81.

⁴⁵⁴ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.78.

⁴⁵⁵ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.158, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.25-26, and Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.42, 45-46.

⁴⁵⁶ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.108, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.170, 181, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.4, 9, 13, 22, 33-34, 37, and Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28.

⁴⁵⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.390, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.108, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.170-171, 181, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.4, 9, 13, 22, 33-34, 37, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.34, and Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28.

⁴⁵⁸ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.14, 54-55, 62, 77 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.101.

⁴⁵⁹ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.108, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.170, 181, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.4, 9, 13, 22, 33-34, 37, and Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28.

- ⁴⁶⁰ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.54-56, 61, Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.111, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.102-103.
- ⁴⁶¹ Wiggins discussed in Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.31.
- ⁴⁶² Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.54-56, 63-64, 81 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp.102-103.
- ⁴⁶³ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.61-62 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.103.
- ⁴⁶⁴ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp. 12, 14, 22, 24, 54-55, Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.18-19, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.101
- ⁴⁶⁵ Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', p.33 and Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', pp.29-30, 35, 42.
- ⁴⁶⁶ Dick, *Born in Heaven Made on Earth*, p.x, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.11-12, 18, 54-55, 61-62, 65, Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.112, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.35, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.103.
- ⁴⁶⁷ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.7, 12, 18.
- ⁴⁶⁸ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.158, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.45-46, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.195, and Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.113, 116.
- ⁴⁶⁹ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.209 and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.193.
- ⁴⁷⁰ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.388, Ackerman, Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen, p.142, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.108, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.170, 181, Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.31-32, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.4, 9, 13, 22, 33-34, 37, and Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28.
- ⁴⁷¹ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.22, 24, 29-30, 78 and Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.109.
- ⁴⁷² Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.98-99, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.56, 62, 78, 80, 207, 209, Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.xxxi, 48, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.104.
- ⁴⁷³ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.63, 65, 68, 207, 209.
- ⁴⁷⁴ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.82 and Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.112.
- ⁴⁷⁵ Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.133-135.
- ⁴⁷⁶ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.108, 126-127, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.170, 181, Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.29, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.4, 9, 13, 22, 33-34, and Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28.
- ⁴⁷⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.462, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.108, 110-111, 121, 126-127, Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.63, Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.72, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.157, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.170, 181, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.23, Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.29, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.3-4, 9, 13-14, 22, 33-34, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.16, 23, 25-26, 33, Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.109, Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.35-36.
- ⁴⁷⁸ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.108, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.170, 181, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.4, 9, 13, 22, 33-34, and Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28.
- ⁴⁷⁹ Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.29.
- ⁴⁸⁰ Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.38 and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.41.
- ⁴⁸¹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.391, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.108, 110-111, 121, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of*

the Goddesses, p.157, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.170, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.23, 75, 78, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.3-4, 9, 13-14, 18, 22, 33-34, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.16, Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28, Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.110, 130, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.35-36, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.104.

⁴⁸² Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.145, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.108, 110-111, 121, Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, pp.18-19, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.157, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.170, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.3-4, 9, 13-14, 22, 33-34, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.16, Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28, Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.109, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.35-36.

⁴⁸³ Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.110 and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.102.

⁴⁸⁴ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.391, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.108, 110-111, 121, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.157, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.170, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.23-24, 78, 81, 207, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.3-4, 9, 13-14, 22, 33-34, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.16, Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.35-36. Yamashita discussed in Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.35-36.

⁴⁸⁵ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.78, 207.

⁴⁸⁶ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.108, 121, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.170, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.78, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.4, 9, 13, 22, 33-34, Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', p.28, and Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.38.

⁴⁸⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.147, Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.187, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.158, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.78, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.37.

⁴⁸⁸ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.390, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.462, Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.63, Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.72, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.23, 25-26, 33.

⁴⁸⁹ Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.22.

⁴⁹⁰ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.390, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.462, Betlyon, 'The Cult of Aserah/Elat at Sidon', pp.53-56, Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, p.63, Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.72, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.23, 25-26, 33, and Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.127.

⁴⁹¹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.33-34, 38.

⁴⁹² 2Sam 3:3; 1Kgs 15:2, 13; 1Chr 3:2; 2Chr 11:20-22, 15:16. Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.144-145, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.33-34, 38.

⁴⁹³ Anxious about idolatry, the biblical text probably remained deliberately ambiguous about the nature of Ma'acah's Asherah image, by not revealing whether the wooden pillar was a cult figure or a cult object, leaving interpretation open to speculation, though offering a clue at the same time. Since the typical, 'official' Levantine cult symbol of Asherah was some sort of stylized tree, Ma'acah may have made a much more explicit image of the goddess that conflicted with the Israelite anti-anthropomorphic depiction of deities. (Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.58, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.171-172, and Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.65.)

⁴⁹⁴ In Syria and Mesopotamia, temples were royal chapels annexed to the palace, where kings and their court performed their devotions. This is also true of the Jerusalem Temple, which formed part of an elaborate palace complex. (De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.320 and Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.89.) Thus, many scholars hold that, though Solomon's Temple was a public national sanctuary for

the kingdom, where people worshiped the national god, it was primarily private to the king and his household. Built by Solomon, at the public's expense, on ground bought by David, it was endowed and dedicated by the king. The kings always kept a tight control over the Temple; making gifts to it (1Kgs 15:15; 2Kgs 12:19), withdrawing funds from its treasury (1Kgs 15:18; 2Kgs 12:19; 16:8; 18:15), undertaking repairs and modification to its buildings and furnishings (2Kgs 15:35; 16:10-18; 18:16; 23:4), it was affected by their religious and political convictions (1Kgs 15:12; 22:47; 2Kgs 18:4; 21:3, 7; 23:4), and they even set up their dais in the court (2Kgs 11:14; 16:18; 23:3). After Solomon, all the kings of Judah were anointed in the Temple court. It is doubtful that the Temple was meant to centralize worship or the cult, for centralization only began to occur centuries later, either during Hezekiah's or Josiah's reign in the 8th or 7th century BCE respectively. This would account for the contemporary existence and acceptance of other sanctuaries throughout the land at this period, as at Bethel (Am 10:13). (De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.320-321 and Rendsburg, 'Reading David in Genesis', p.24.)

⁴⁹⁵ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.390, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.145, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.171, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.64-65, 80, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.34, Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', pp.38-39, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.102.

⁴⁹⁶ Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.33-34.

⁴⁹⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.145, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.34, 38.

⁴⁹⁸ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.64-65, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.34, 38, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.102.

⁴⁹⁹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391', Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.86, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.34, 38.

⁵⁰⁰ Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.34-35.

⁵⁰¹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.145-146, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.34-35, 38.

⁵⁰² Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.146, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.463, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.70-71, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.35, 38.

⁵⁰³ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.463, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.35, 38.

⁵⁰⁴ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.146, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.68, 70, 80, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.35-36, 38, Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.128, and Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', pp.38-39.

⁵⁰⁵ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.35-36, 38.

⁵⁰⁶ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.146, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.456, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.5, 57-59, 61, 68, 71-72, Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.29, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.36-38, Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.128, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.102.

⁵⁰⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.146, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, Hadley, *The Cult*

of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah, pp.57-59, 61, 68, 71-72, 74, Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40, Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.114, Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', p.39, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.102.

⁵⁰⁸ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.390-391, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.155, and Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.40.

⁵⁰⁹ Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.37-38.

⁵¹⁰ Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.72.

⁵¹¹ While there is no explicit mention of a shrine in Jerusalem prior to David's conquest, Melchizedek's description as both king and priest of Salem implies that there was a Jebusite shrine in Salem which David did not destroy, nor did he himself built the shrine (2Sam 7). (Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.124, 126.) This reconstruction is based on a pre-Israelite biblical tradition which declares that David bought the threshing-floor of Araunah in Jerusalem, and some cattle, for 50 shekels of silver, which was to be the site of the future Temple (2Chr 3:1). He built 'the altar of burnt-offering for Israel' on the site (1Chr 22:1), and sacrificed the cattle (2Sam 24:18-25). (Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.85, Hurowitz, 'Inside Solomon's Temple', p.28, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.167, and Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.128. Notice that this 'temple' has an agricultural element reminiscent of David's great grandfather Boaz's 'threshing-floor' found in the *Book of Ruth* (Ruth 3:3, 6, 14).) David brought his own Yahweh priest, Abiathar, to Jerusalem, appointing him beside Zadok. Before long, he brought the Ark, the ancient sacred symbol associated with the worship of Yahweh, into his new capital. A home was needed for the Ark prior to the building of Solomon's Temple. Thus, it was probably placed in Zadok's already existing shrine, which had been dedicated to El Elyon, El the Mighty One (Gen 14:18), and may have been 'connected' to Yahwism after David came in and took over; rededicated or just syncretized. At the same time, by preserving Zadok at his post, David appeased the desire of his Jebusite subjects, who probably still formed the bulk of the new capital's population. Thus, for political reason, Abiathar and Zadok were joint custodians of the sanctuary where the Ark was kept (2Sam 15:24). (Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.126-128.)

⁵¹² Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.187, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.38-39, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.35, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.332.

⁵¹³ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.146, Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, pp.186-187, 197, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.38-39, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.35, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.332.

⁵¹⁴ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.146, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.87, Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, pp.186-187, 197, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, pp.38-39, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.35, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.332.

⁵¹⁵ We may have a similar situation here as with the tale of Kirta. When Kirta failed to honour his vow to Athirat and give offerings of gold and silver to her shrine after being victorious in his war, Athirat decides to punish and ruin him. She struck him with a disease and caused the kingdom's crops to fail, which brought about famine in the land. (Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, pp.53, 63, 67.) The women mentioned in *Jeremiah* claim that when they, their fathers, and their kings neglected their vow to honour the 'Queen of Heaven', war and famine plagued them. And so they believe that by returning to worship the goddess, they will appease her and have peace and plenty again. (Jer 17-18)

⁵¹⁶ Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.127, Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.38, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.36.

⁵¹⁷ Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.330.

⁵¹⁸ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.34 and Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.198-199.

⁵¹⁹ Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.116-117. A tablet that reads 'if the finger of Athirat points', was found at Taanach, near Megiddo, which suggests that Asherah gave oracles. Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.25 and Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.42, 45-46. The Bible also mentions oracles given under a tree (2Sam 5:24; cf. Gen 12:6). Also, the book of Ezekiel makes numerous mentions of oracles being delivered on the day of the new moon (Ez 26:1; 29:17; 31:1; 32:1). Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New*

Moon and Yahweh, pp.54, 105. A new reading of the Taanach tablet argued that the word read as 'finger' may actually mean 'wizard'. Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.27.

⁵²⁰ Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73, Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, pp.186, 197, and Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.33.

⁵²¹ Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73 and Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, pp.186, 197.

⁵²² Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.197.

⁵²³ Smith, *The Early History of God*, p.124 and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.38.

⁵²⁴ Dever, 'What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?', p.184.

⁵²⁵ Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.38-39.

⁵²⁶ Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.24, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.38-39. Further, by the 7th century, an *asherah* also stood in the Bethel sanctuary (2Kgs 23:15). Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.191-192, 194, 278, 400.

⁵²⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.391, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.147, Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.187, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.37.

⁵²⁸ Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.184. A few important archaeological discoveries support this conclusion, namely an 8th century BCE inscription, from a site called Khirbet el-Qom, some ten kilometres east-southeast of Lachish, whose inscription has proven difficult to read and been greatly discussed by biblical scholars. Patrick D. Miller offered this satisfying attempt at translation: "Blessed is Uriyahu by Yahweh; Yea from his adversaries by his *asherah* he has saved him". (Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.146.)

⁵²⁹ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.456, Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73, Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, pp.176, 192-193, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, pp.160-162, Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', pp.26-27, and Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.33.

⁵³⁰ Ahituv, 'Did God Really have a Wife?', p.66, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.456, Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73, Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, pp.176, 192-193, Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.73, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, pp.160-162, Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', pp.26-27, and Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.38.

⁵³¹ Ahituv, 'Did God Really have a Wife?', p.66, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.456, Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73, Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, pp.176, 192-193, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.333-334, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, pp.160-162, Stern, 'Pagan Yahwism', pp.26-27, Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.38, and Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', pp.30-31, note 10. Albright discussed in Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.193.

⁵³² Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.197.

⁵³³ Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.109, Larrington, *The Woman's Companion to Mythology*, p.58, Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.125-126, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.104. It has been suggested that the gradual depiction of the persistent important sacred tree symbol, appearing all around the ancient Eastern Mediterranean cultures, though it became rare in Israel, survived in Judah in the form of the menorah, a seven-branched lamp-stand of the Priestly tradition. Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.278, 401, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.42-43, and Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', pp.29-54.

⁵³⁴ Num 21:5-9 (E); 2Kgs 18:4; the magic wand of Ex 4:2-5 which was put in the Holy of Holies, Heb 9:4.

⁵³⁵ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.398 note 57, Freedman, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 4, p.20, Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp.123, 128-129, 132, Murison, *The Serpent in the Old Testament*, pp.125-126, and Rowley, *Zadok and Nehushtan*, pp.132, 138. This rod may also be identified with the pole that appears in the name of the altar erected by Moses, *Yahweh-nissi*, 'Yahweh is my rod', which celebrated the victory over the Amalekites through the use of Yahweh's magic wand (Ex

17:8-16, (E)). Moses was told to work wonders with this wand (Ex 4:17 (E)). (Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp.123, 132.) It was through this rod, when cast on the ground, that Yahweh first manifested himself to Moses in the form of a serpent (Ex 4:1-5, (J)). (Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.500 and Murison, 'The Serpent in the Old Testament', p.122.) This rod divided the Sea of Reeds in Egypt (Ex 14:16), and made water come forth from the rock (Ex 17:5; Num 20:7-13), although Ex 15:25 (J) mentions a stick (usually translated 'tree'), which is simply another form of the magic rod used by Moses to make the water sweet at Marah. According to the P source, the rod became Aaron's (Ex 7:9, 10, 12; 8:5, 16), since, at this late date, he is perceived as the 'Levite' *par excellence* (Num 16-18). (Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp.123, 132.)

⁵³⁶ Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.133-136.

⁵³⁷ Murison, 'The Serpent in the Old Testament', pp.125-126 and Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.133-136.

⁵³⁸ Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.133-36. Kennett discussed in Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.135. Robertson Smith discussed in Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.136.

⁵³⁹ Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.136-138 and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.320-322.

⁵⁴⁰ An omphalos myth is a myth that recounts a certain location as the centre or navel of the world.

⁵⁴¹ Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.137-138 and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.320-322.

⁵⁴² Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.137, 140.

⁵⁴³ Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.139-140.

⁵⁴⁴ Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.320-322.

⁵⁴⁵ Beltz, *God and the Gods*, pp.119-120.

⁵⁴⁶ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.398, note 57, Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.500, and Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, pp.4, note 13, 70-71.

⁵⁴⁷ Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.29 and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.321. There is also textual evidence of serpent worship in Jerusalem, such as the Serpent Stone beside the spring of En-rogel (1Kgs 1:9), where Adonijah held his feast in a room adjoining the shrine at Solomon's accession. The ceremony, in which Zadok anointed Solomon to be king, took place at Gihon (1Kgs 1:33, 38, 45), commonly located at the only spring near Jerusalem, known as the 'Virgin's Spring', which is also El-rogel. Further, the sons of Zadok and Abiathar remained there during Absalom's revolt, waiting to carry news to David (2Sam 17:17). This evidence suggests a connection between the En-rogel Serpent Stone shrine outside Jerusalem (cf. 2Chr 32:30, 33:14) and the sanctuary served by Zadok and Abiathar in Jerusalem, with the same serpent-god in both places. (Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.137, 141.) We also read of a Dragon's well (Neh 2:13). (Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.137.) I suspect that this serpent-god was the fertility-god of the Gihon river, upon which the city of Jerusalem depended for water and therefore for life.

⁵⁴⁸ Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.137 and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.320-321.

⁵⁴⁹ Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.139-140. Human rivalry and jealousy was inevitable when the two priests were placed side by side. The king had his own priest, Abiathar, who had shared his afflictions, yet, in a political attempt to conciliate his new subjects, and to refrain from rousing their religious hostility by overthrowing their priest, David found it necessary to keep Zadok. Later Solomon dismissed Abiathar and kept only Zadok; following this, a story was necessary to legitimize Zadok's priesthood for Israel (Gen 14), while the Jebusite Serpent became related to the Israelite traditions. (Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.139.)

⁵⁵⁰ Murison, 'The Serpent in the Old Testament', pp.125-126.

⁵⁵¹ David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*, pp.86-89, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, p.111, and Mercatante, *Who's Who in Egyptian Mythology*, p.6.

⁵⁵² Bertman, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Mesopotamia*, p.66 and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.111-112.

⁵⁵³ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, p.112.

⁵⁵⁴ Hendel discussed in Dick, *Born in Heaven Made on Earth*, p.8.

⁵⁵⁵ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, p.112.

- ⁵⁵⁶ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.399-400, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.152, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.257-260, 265, and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.112-113. Alt discussed in Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.399.
- ⁵⁵⁷ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.152-153, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p.257, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.112-114, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.84, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.207-209, 213.
- ⁵⁵⁸ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.400, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.152-153, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, p.257, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.112-114, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.84, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.207-209, 213.
- ⁵⁵⁹ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.152-153, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.257-262, 265, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.112-114, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.84, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.207-209, 213.
- ⁵⁶⁰ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.152-153, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.112-114, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.207-209, 213.
- ⁵⁶¹ 2Sam 7:14b-16; Ps 89:20-38; Jer 33:17, 19-22; 2Chr 21:7.
- ⁵⁶² Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.258-259.
- ⁵⁶³ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.152-153, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.257-262, 265, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.112-114, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.84, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.207-209, 213.
- ⁵⁶⁴ Frayne, 'Notes on the Sacred Marriage Rite', pp.5-6, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.59, 62, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.6.
- ⁵⁶⁵ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.152-153, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.112-114, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.207-209, 213.
- ⁵⁶⁶ 2Sam 6 (1Chr 13, 15, 16), 24:18-25 (1Chr 21:18-22:1); 1Kgs 5:15-8:66 (2Chr 1:18-7:10), 15:12-15 (2Chr 15:1-18); 2Kgs 12:5-17 (2Chr 24:4-14), 18:4 (2Chr 29:3-31:21), 22:3-23:23 (2Chr 34:3-35:16).
- ⁵⁶⁷ See for example 1Sam 13:9-10; 2Sam 6:13, 17-18; 24:25; 1Kgs 8:5, 62-64; 9:25; 12:33; 13:1f.; 2Kgs 16:12-15.
- ⁵⁶⁸ See for example 2Sam 7:2-3; 8:17; 20:25; 24:25; 1Kgs 2:26-27; 4:2; 5-8; 12:26-33; 2Kgs 12:5-9; 16:10-18; 22:3-7; 23; 1Chr 22-29; Am 7:13.
- ⁵⁶⁹ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.152-153, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.112-114, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.207-209, 211-213.
- ⁵⁷⁰ Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, pp.89-90 and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.212-213.
- ⁵⁷¹ This loincloth is reminiscent of the ones Adam and Eve sewed together from fig leaves. But the Hebrew word is *ephod* in 2Samuel, not the same as in Genesis, *chagor*. However, to ceremonially put on a *chagor* has a militaristic aspect to it, associated with a sword, and it is a variant article of *ephod*; thus one can gird (*chagor*) himself with a priestly loincloth (*ephod*) (1Sam 2:18). Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p.95.
- ⁵⁷² De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, p.114 and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.211-212.
- ⁵⁷³ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, p.114. 2Chr 26:16-20 (a post-exilic source); cf. Num 17:3-11; 1Chr 23:13. The event is not recorded in the pre-exilic source of 2Kgs 15:1-7, where the cause of Azariah/Uzziah's leprosy is said to have been brought about because of the king's tolerance of other shrines. It should be noted that Lv 10:1-3 records the story of the two sons of Aaron who were struck down by Yahweh for having inappropriately burnt incense before their god (the Ark?), though this again is a post-exilic source known as P.
- ⁵⁷⁴ Mowinckel discussed in Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.222.
- ⁵⁷⁵ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.87.
- ⁵⁷⁶ Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.227.
- ⁵⁷⁷ Brueggemann, 'From Dust to Kingship', pp.1, 8. Later, when *Lamentation* was written, the 'being in the dust' imagery (Lam 3:28-30) came to express the state of Israel as a whole, and affirmed that suffering and humiliation could be endured, for the faithful had confidence that 'resurrection' was intended

by Yahweh. (Brueggemann, 'From Dust to Kingship', p.8.) Wijngaards discussed in Brueggemann, 'From Dust to Kingship', p.1.

⁵⁷⁸ The Hebrew word *adam* is typically translated in English as 'man'. There is an intentional word play between *adam* and *adamah*, usually translated as earth, from which he was made. We could get a similar word play is we translated in English, earthling from earth.

⁵⁷⁹ Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.6-7, Brueggemann, 'From Dust to Kingship', pp.1, 7, 12-13, 16-17, and Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.31.

⁵⁸⁰ Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.6-7, Brueggemann, 'From Dust to Kingship', pp.7, 12, 16-17, and Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.31.

⁵⁸¹ Brueggemann, 'From Dust to Kingship', pp.7, 12, 16-17, and Merkur, *The Mystery of Manna*, p.31.

⁵⁸² Boomershine, 'The Structure of Narrative Rhetoric in Genesis 2-3', p.128 and Brueggemann, 'From Dust to Kingship', pp.1, 13. Wijngaards discussed in Brueggemann, 'From Dust to Kingship', p.1.

⁵⁸³ The biblical text mentions the story of how Sarah laughed at Yahweh when he told her that she would bare a son. In Hebrew the word laugh (*yitzechak*) echoes Isaac's name (*Yitzchak*). However, both words derive from the Hebrew root *tzachak*, from which derives the word *metzachek*, a word that is used to refer sexual activity (Gen 21:9; 26:8; 39:17). Teubal, *Ancient Sisterhood*, pp.107-109, 134-138.

⁵⁸⁴ May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.87. See also Teubal's *Sarah the Priestess* for a convincing argument on Sarah performing a sacred marriage ritual and conceiving Isaac.

⁵⁸⁵ Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, p.26 and May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.87.

⁵⁸⁶ Ackroyd, *The First Book of Samuel*, pp 20, 25, and May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.87.

⁵⁸⁷ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.61-62.

⁵⁸⁸ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.385, note 1, Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', p.23, Cogan, *1 Kings*, pp.397-398, and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 1*, p.117.

⁵⁸⁹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.401, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.81, 83, 91, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398, Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.11, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.104. Wiggins discussed in Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.83.

⁵⁹⁰ The *Septuagint* records Asa's mother, and her name was Ana (LXX 3Kgs 15:9).

⁵⁹¹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.399, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.150-151, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 1*, pp.117-118, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.26, Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.10, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.331, note 1.

⁵⁹² 1Kgs 15:1-2, 9-10; 22:41-42; 2Kgs 8:25-26; 12:1; 14:1-2; 15:1-2, 32-33; 18:1-2; similarly, 1Kgs 14:21.

⁵⁹³ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.399. Though further research needs to be done on the topic, if there is available data on the subject, and this thesis is certainly not the place for such an endeavour, I suspect that the *gevivot* began as *qedeshot*, that is, priestesses, who were the king's wives, accounting for his large harem. They would have taken part in the annual sacred marriage with the king who acted as the god. (May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.89, note 3) The same situation may have existed in Sumeria, where a *lukur* (king's wife), *qadishtu* in Akkadian, may have been able to become a *nin-dingir* (king's main wife; lit. lady deity; see for example king Mesannepadda's wife Nubanda). (Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.18, 60, 240.) Early in Israel's monarchic history, these *gevivot* were allowed to come from various nations. It should be remembered that, though all of the king's wives may have been *qedeshot*, not all *qedeshot* were the king's wives. Tracing their Israelite history, it would seem that after Solomon, thus beginning with Rehoboam's reign and the separation of the Northern and Southern kingdoms, the *gevira* perhaps had to be from the Davidic Dynasty (Ma'acah and Azuba (LXX 3Kgs 15:9)). This did not last long, for after Asa and Jehoshaphat's reform, and following Athalia's usurpation of the throne, the *gevira* was perhaps the daughter of Zadokite high-priest (compare priests and Levites in 2Kgs 11-12 and 2Chr 23-24), beginning with Jehoaddim, who, I believe, was the daughter of the priest Jehoiada (2Chr 24:3; see also Jerusha, daughter of another priest named Zadok (2Kgs 15:33; 1Chr 6:12), who was wife of Azariah/Uzziah). This new trend of *gevivot* as

daughters of the Zadokite priesthood seems to have persisted until Hezekiah's reform and the fall of Israel. Following this event, the name of the *gevurah*'s father is not only mentioned, but so is his town, which, I suspect, was mentioned because of its connection with the Levites; for example, Josiah's wife, Hamital, was the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah, which was a Levitical town (Josh 21:13). At this time, the Levites were gaining more power in the priesthood, and their daughters were possibly married off to the kings of Judah until the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the kingdom. This excursus is no more than a theory at this point, and it is doubtful that further evidence can be presented on the topic, though perhaps further research may reveal more support at a future time.

⁵⁹⁴ However, the rare Israelite term *shegal* refers to a woman that is separate from the harem, for she is mentioned as standing on the right hand of the king, suggesting that she is the queen consort and the equivalent to the *gevurah* of Judah (Ps 45:10). Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', p.24, note 13 and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.118-119.

⁵⁹⁵ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.150-151 and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, p.118.

⁵⁹⁶ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386, 389, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.154, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.62, Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', pp.23-24, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.113, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.117-118, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.136, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.26, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.10. Andreasen discussed in Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.386.

⁵⁹⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386, 389, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.62, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.113, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.117-118, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.136, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.26, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.10.

⁵⁹⁸ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.389, note 14, Binger, 'Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament', p.113, Cogan, '1 Kings', p.398, and De Vaux, 'Ancient Israel'; Volume 1, pp.117-118.

⁵⁹⁹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386, 400 and Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', p.24. Andreasen discussed in Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.386.

⁶⁰⁰ Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', p.24 and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.10.

⁶⁰¹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.389, note 15, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.61, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.113, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.117-118, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.136, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.10.

⁶⁰² Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', p.24 and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.10.

⁶⁰³ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.61-63, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.117-118, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.10.

⁶⁰⁴ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386-387 and Cogan, *1 Kings*, pp.397-398. Andreasen and Ben-Barak are discussed in Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386-387.

⁶⁰⁵ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386-387, 389, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.61, 75, 85, Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', pp.23-24, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.113, Cogan, *1 Kings*, pp.397-398, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 1, pp.117-118, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.136, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.26, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.10. Molin discussed in Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.61.

⁶⁰⁶ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386-387, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.75, 79, and Cogan, *1 Kings*, pp.397-398. Solomon's mother, Bathsheba, was a *gevirah*. The narrative recounting how she became David's wife is set in the context of the annual *Sukkot* festival. One evening, David saw Bathsheba bathing from the roof of his palace (2Sam 11:2). A similar ritual was carried out on the rooftop of Ras Shamra and in a *gigunu*, a small temple at the top of a ziggurat, as Riesenfeld identified. (Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.79)

⁶⁰⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386-387, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.75, 79, and Cogan, *1 Kings*, pp.397-398.

⁶⁰⁸ The first mention of a Ma'acah in the Hebrew Bible is in reference of king of Gath (1Kgs 2:39), a city in Philistia. The Philistines are commonly believed to have originated from the Aegean. The name Ma'acah is used for both men and women without any changes to its orthography, though it would appear to have a feminine ending if it were Hebrew/Semitic in origin. It is perhaps because it is used for both men and women that some scholars believe that it is a title, akin perhaps to the Egyptian word Pharaoh. Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.136

⁶⁰⁹ 2Chr 13:2 names her Micaiah, mother of Abijah and wife of Rehoboam, and there she is said to be the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. Yet, 2Chr 11:20-22 identifies her as Ma'acah, still mother of Abijah and wife of Rehoboam, except she is now the daughter of Absalom; She is identified the same way in 1Kgs 15:10.

⁶¹⁰ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.389, note 14, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.143, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.113, and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 1*, pp.117-118.

⁶¹¹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.389, note 14, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.143, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.61, 63, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.113, and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 1*, pp.117-118. Morgenstern discussed in Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.61.

⁶¹² Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.143. It should be noted that the *Septuagint* has Azuba as the name of Asa's mother (3Kgs 15:9).

⁶¹³ This may be why the name of Asa's daughter-in-law is not preserved in the text, because she never became a *gevirah*. Asa may have outlawed the office and practice of *gevirah* after dismissing his grandmother Ma'acah. Asa's mother Ana may have died young and never ascended to become a *gevirah*, however, he probably dismissed his wife Azubah as well when he deposed his grandmother.

⁶¹⁴ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.85-86.

⁶¹⁵ The word *mipletset*, 'an abominable image', occurs only in this verse of Kings and in its parallel in Chronicles. Its translation is obviously a matter of some debate, partly because of the grammatical difficulties associated with the word *la'asherah*. Some scholars, rather than reading the proper name of the goddess Asherah, prefer to read a common noun, translating the entire phrase as 'she made an abominable image of the *asherah*'. Regardless of the translation, commentators generally agree that the sense is very much the same, since the stylized *asherah* wooden pole or sacred tree image, mentioned elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, was frequently erected in honour of the goddess Asherah in other places of the Israelite-Canaanite tradition. (Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.143-144.) However, because the Hebrew Bible usually uses the word *asherah* by itself to mean the goddess' sacred pole/tree, it is intriguing that it is not used by itself in this verse but rather is preceded by the noun *mipletset*. It has been suggested that the root of that noun is *pals*, 'to shudder', perhaps meaning that people shuddered at the sight of the statue, and the word may be synonymous with *pesel*, 'idol', used in 2Kgs 21:3-7 in reference to the image that Manasseh made of Asherah. (Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', pp.38-39.) Therefore scholars are now inclined to say that Ma'acah, as Manasseh, did not make a stylized tree for Asherah, but rather made a statue of the goddess. (Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.65, 68, 70, 80.)

⁶¹⁶ The main reason for suggesting that a statue of Asherah stood in the Jerusalem Temple is because of its proximity to the palace, making it the most probable place in which a cult icon would have been erected by a member of the royal family, for it essentially functioned as a royal chapel. In the southern Judahite kingdom, kings were considered as the titular heads of the Jerusalem Temple. They had the right to appoint temple personnel and determine appropriate furnishings. Because the *gevirot* played a powerful role in the royal court, it is likely that they also exerted influence over matters concerning cult officials and

paraphernalia. Thus, Ma'acah most certainly erected her cult statue of Asherah in the Jerusalem Temple. Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.144.

⁶¹⁷ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.389, note 15, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.143-144, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.85, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.113, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Volume 1, pp.117-118, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.136, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.26, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', pp.10, 22.

⁶¹⁸ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.389, note 15, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.143-144, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, p.113, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Volume 1, pp.117-118, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.136, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', pp.10, 22. Frevel discussed in Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.22.

⁶¹⁹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.389, note 15, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.143-144, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.86, Binger, 'Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament', p.113, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Volume 1, pp.117-118, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.136, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', pp.10, 22. It is probable that the real reason for Ma'acah's disposal is due to the rise of Damascus as a mounting threat to Israel, creating a Judean-Damascene alliance, a policy Ma'acah had opposed. This led to a resurgence of Judean imperialistic desires directed towards Israel and a re-conquest of southern Benjamin (1Kgs 15:22). However, this imperialistic resurgence did not succeed or last. Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.22.

⁶²⁰ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.388 and Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.142.

⁶²¹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.388, 400-401, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.153-154, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.142-143 Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.81, 91, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', pp.11, 22.

⁶²² Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.388, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.142, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.76, Bird, 'The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus', p.18 note 35, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.22 note 69.

⁶²³ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.388, 400-401, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.143, 153-154, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.81, 91, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.11.

⁶²⁴ Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.154 and Bird, 'The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus', p.11.

⁶²⁵ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.385, 387-401, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.143, Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', pp.31, 34, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.81, 91, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398 and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.11.

⁶²⁶ Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', pp.31, 34. Bathsheba advocated her younger son Solomon's succession over Adonijah's kingship claim. Similarly, Abijam/Abijah was Ma'acah's younger son (2Chr 11:18-23), while Jehoahaz, Hamital youngest, was the younger brother of Jehoiakim (2Kgs 23:31, 36), and Jehoiachin's queen-mother, Nehushta, was Zedekiah's younger brother (2Chr 36:9-11; cf. 2Kgs 24:17 where Jehoiachin is identified as Zedekiah's nephew). Ben-Barak also notes examples of this phenomenon from Ugarit, the Hittite empire, Assyria, Y'dy (Ya'diya?), Sam'al, Babylon, and Persia. Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.385-386.

⁶²⁷ Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', pp.31-34.

⁶²⁸ Ben-Barak, 'The Status and Right of the Gebira', pp.31-34, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398, and Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.26.

⁶²⁹ Though there seems to have been a rivalry between Adonijah, son of Haggith, and Bathsheba, the latter wanting to assure that her son Solomon becomes king as ordained, it was not the queens themselves that quarrel (1Kgs 1:11-40). Rather, it seems that Bathsheba wants to ensure that her son would ascend to the throne, as was promised to her by David long before (1Kgs 1:17, 29-30). The story clearly identifies Adonijah as trying to usurp the throne that was rightfully Solomon's from his birth (2Sam 12:24-25).

⁶³⁰ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.399-400 and Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.153.

⁶³¹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.387-388, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.143, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.331, note 1.

⁶³² Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.385, 387-401, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.143, 153, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.81, 91, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398, Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.11, and Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.104.

⁶³³ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.385, 387-401, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.143, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.81, 91, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.11.

⁶³⁴ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.385, 387-401, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.143, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.69, 75-76, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.81, 91, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.11.

⁶³⁵ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel' pp.385, 387-401, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.143, 153-154, Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, pp.69, 75-76, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.81, 91, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.11.

⁶³⁶ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.385, 387-401, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, pp.143, 154, Binger, *Asherah; Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.81, 91, Cogan, *1 Kings*, p.398, and Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', p.11. It should be noted that the queen-mother crowned the king on his wedding day (Song 3:11). It is rather interesting that her son was not considered 'king' after his father's death, but only after his wedding. In all likelihood, this 'wedding' was a sacred marriage, where the existing *gevira* performed a key role. As ideologically replicating the mother of the gods, the queen-mother's role must have reflected something that took place in the world of the gods. Aside from authenticating her son's right to the throne and crowning him in the ritual, according to James, the *gevira*, like the Hittite queen-mother, brought the king into a 'mother-son' relation with the goddess, perhaps in a symbolic gesture showing the goddess' approval of the union. In Sumerian texts there is mention of Inanna's mother, Ningal, approving of Dumuzi's marriage to Inanna and his becoming king. Wolkstein and Kramer, *Inanna*, pp. 35-45 and Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.78.

⁶³⁷ The Juahite sacred marriage ritual might represent this divine sonship ideology, especially when Eve exclaimed that she has given birth to a son by Yahweh (Gen 4:1). Ahlstrom went as far as to suggest that the word *amah* (maidservant-wife; cf. Ex 21:7-11), found in the epithet *ben amateach* (son of your maidservant-wife), which parallels *eved* ([cultic/priestly] servant), refers to the king's mother as the cultic/priestly maidservant-wife of Yahweh (Psalms 86:16; 116:16). The verse indicates that, as *gevira*, she is the handmaid of Yahweh, while the phrase *ben amateach* infers that the king was born of the 'goddess' through *hieros gamos*. Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.77.

⁶³⁸ Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.104.

⁶³⁹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.374, Rendsburg, 'Reading David in Genesis', pp.25-26, and Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp. 113, 118, 123, 129.

⁶⁴⁰ 2Sam 8:17 declares him to be the son of Ahitub, of the family of Eli. 1Chr 24:3 claims him to be from the house of Eleazar, which contrasts with the house of Ithamar, to which Eli belonged.

⁶⁴¹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.374 and Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.113, 118, 123.

⁶⁴² De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.374, Rendsburg, 'Reading David in Genesis', pp.25-26, and Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.129. Bentzen and Mowinckel discussed in Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.129.

⁶⁴³ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.374, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.84, Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.123-125, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.318, note 5.

⁶⁴⁴ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.374, Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.123-125, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.318, note 5.

⁶⁴⁵ This god originally might have been Shalim, the god of Dusk or evening star, though over time El-Elyon became the patron deity of the city. Jerusalem (Yerushalayim) may have derived from *Yeru shelem/shalayim* = 'Established by Shalim [the two Shalim]', or 'To raise up Shalim [the two Shalim]', or 'To found by Shalim [the two Shalim]', or perhaps even 'City of Shalim [the two Shalim]' = *Uru Shalim*. This duality in the ending of the name may point to the city being founded by twins, like Rome. Note that Shalim has a twin brother named Shachar and he is the god of Dawn or morning star. They were the sons of El by two unnamed goddess usually thought to be Athirat and Rachmay, Shapash, or even Astarte. Leick, *A Dictionary of Ancient Near Eastern Mythology*, pp.146-147.

⁶⁴⁶ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.374 and Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.124.

⁶⁴⁷ Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.130.

⁶⁴⁸ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.374 and Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.124.

⁶⁴⁹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.374, Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.123-125, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.318, note 5.

⁶⁵⁰ Rendsburg, 'Reading David in Genesis', pp.25-26 and Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.129.

⁶⁵¹ Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.129.

⁶⁵² Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.84 and Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p.129.

⁶⁵³ David, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Egypt*, pp.111-113 and Robins, *Women in Ancient Egypt*, p.152.

⁶⁵⁴ Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.5.

⁶⁵⁵ Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.248.

⁶⁵⁶ Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.283, Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.171, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.248.

⁶⁵⁷ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.201, 276, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.7, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.248. Death and sexuality, two key elements found in both the sacred marriage and Eden, were not considered pure and divine by late Priestly laws; thus they were kept separate from the realm of the 'holy'. Similarly, when a woman of childbearing age stopped menstruating it meant conception and life, thus many societies came to associate menstruation with death, since that meant that the woman had not conceived. (Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, p.147 and Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.189. See further Wright, 'Holiness, Sex, and Death in the Garden of Eden', pp.305-329.) The laws of purity, found in *Leviticus* 11-15, a book primarily focused on the canons of worship and cultic ritual practices for the Levitical priesthood, are vitally dependent on the presence of the Temple (or local temples), which gave them a geographical focus. They all had the same intent: to exclude a person (or object) in an impure state from approaching, entering, or touching anything connected with the divine residence. (Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, pp.147-148, 157-158.) There is a law that defines the status of a menstruant woman as *niddah*, one who is 'ostracized' or 'excluded'. The menstruant woman's status figures in two different contexts of complex biblical laws: the laws of purity and impurity (Lv 15:19-33; 18:19 & 20:18), and the sexual prohibitions. The case of the *niddah* is but one of many instances of contamination found in the laws of purity, such as contact with a corpse, leprosy, seminal discharge, certain insects, and more. (Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, pp.147-148.) Therefore when a woman was a *niddah*, she could not enter the Temple, which suggests that at one time non-menstruating women were allowed to enter the Temple. There might have been Temple personnel and priestesses, such as the *qedeshot*, whom, as we have already seen, seem to have been allowed in the Temple (2Kgs 23:7). Queens appear to also have been allowed in the Temple, such as Ma'acah (1Kgs 15:13) and Athalia (2Chr 23:12-14). This would imply that women might have been able to perform rituals compatible with domestic-reproduction, which may have been exercised in periods or situations when they were free from ritual taboo. (Bird, 'The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus', p.7.) The laws of *niddah* continued to exist, but their focus, beginning

with the Talmud through to the medieval period, shifted from the realms of ritual impurity, that existed during the 1st and 2nd Temple periods, to become adapted to the sphere of marital and sexual relations. (Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, p.158.)

⁶⁵⁸ Bird, 'The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus', p.10, Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.201, 276, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.24, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.283, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.7, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.248.

⁶⁵⁹ Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.248.

⁶⁶⁰ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.201, 276, note 17 and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.248.

⁶⁶¹ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', pp.14, 21, 24, Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, pp.330-331, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.2, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitutes', p.2.

⁶⁶² Fisher, 'Cultic Prostitution in the Ancient Near East? A Reassessment', pp.229-230, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.3, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitutes', p.2.

⁶⁶³ Bird, 'The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus', p.10 and Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.3.

⁶⁶⁴ Kirsch, *The Harlot by the Side of the Road*, p.132.

⁶⁶⁵ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.225, Kirsch, *The Harlot by the Side of the Road*, p.132, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.4, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.262.

⁶⁶⁶ Fisher, 'Cultic Prostitution in the Ancient Near East? A Reassessment', pp.229-230, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.36, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.225, Kirsch, *The Harlot by the Side of the Road*, p.132, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', pp.4-5, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.262.

⁶⁶⁷ Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.284.

⁶⁶⁸ Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.25 and Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', pp.5-6.

⁶⁶⁹ Ochshorn in Olson, *The Book of the Goddess: Past and Present*, p.26.

⁶⁷⁰ Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, p.820.

⁶⁷¹ Bird, 'The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus', p.10.

⁶⁷² Kirsch, *The Harlot by the Side of the Road*, p.132.

⁶⁷³ Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', pp.7-8 and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitutes', p.2.

⁶⁷⁴ Kirsch, *The Harlot by the Side of the Road*, p.132.

⁶⁷⁵ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.208, 211 and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.283.

⁶⁷⁶ Grossman and Haut, *Daughters of the King*, p.18.

⁶⁷⁷ Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.247.

⁶⁷⁸ Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean', p.7 and Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, pp.87, 209.

⁶⁷⁹ Buonaventura, *Serpent of the Nile*, p.35 and Mann and Lyle, *Sacred Sexuality*, p.42. The 'dance of the seven veils' or the 'dance of the veils of Ishtar' is said to be related to the story of Inanna/Ishtar entitled *The Descent of Inanna*. In this tale, the goddess dresses herself in all her best clothes and jewelleries, and applies make-up, before descending into the Underworld to visit her sister Ereshkigal. However, in order to gain access to the Underworld, she must pass through the seven gates. The gate keeper, Neti, under the order of Ereshkigal, asks Inanna to remove one article from her body for each gate she goes through. After having traversed the seventh gate, Inanna finds herself naked. Once in the Underworld, Ereshkigal takes Inanna's life away. There she remains, dead, for three days, until help is sent to save her and bring her back to Heaven. On her way out, Inanna once again passes through the seven gates, and at each gate she retrieves her items and puts them on. This has been allegorically interpreted as a 'moon myth', where Inanna, as her moon aspect, loses power, or decreases in light, for seven days, starting from the last quarter, until it is the new moon. For three days the moon is dark, missing from the night sky, thus believed to have died and been trapped in the underworld. Then finally, the moon reappears as a sliver

and waxes, gaining powers, as Inanna regains her items of power for seven days, until the first quarter. For this reason, correlations have been observed between Inanna passing through the seven gates and undressing, and the dance of the seven veils. Buonaventura, *Serpent of the Nile*, p.35, Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, pp.154-162, and Kramer & Wolkstein, *Inanna*, pp.52-73, 159.

⁶⁸⁰ Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.37, 88, and Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, p.821.

⁶⁸¹ Sacred trees are well attested in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 12:18, 14:13, 35:4, 8; Josh 24:26; Jdg 9:37; Jer 2:20, 3:6, 13, 17:2; Ez 6:13; Hos 4:13.). Though the text does not explicitly say that people dance around the tree, in view of the commonality of this practice in the surrounding cultures wherever sacred trees were found, it is unfathomable that the Israelites did not themselves perform this sacred dance around their sacred trees. It may just have been taken for granted by the biblical writers/editors. It is believed that, in addition to replicating the movements of the celestial bodies, this dance around the sacred tree was meant as imitative magic, enticing plants, and thus crops, to grow by enticing the spirit animating the tree to also dance and come to life. To surmise, the sacred circle dance was a fertility dance. Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.9, 14-15, 88-89, 105-106.

⁶⁸² Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.201, 276, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.24, Ochshorn in Olson, *The Book of the Goddess; Past and Present*, p.26, Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.28, 88, 104, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.283, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.248.

⁶⁸³ Bird, 'The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus', p.20 note 41, Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.201, 276 note 17, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.24, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.283, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.248.

⁶⁸⁴ Davies, 'The Canaanite-Hebrew Goddess', p.73, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.201, 276, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.179, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.160, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.248.

⁶⁸⁵ Ackerman, 'And the Women Knead Dough', p.25 and Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.255.

⁶⁸⁶ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.26-27, 86. According to Hardin, from hunting and gathering societies to settled tribes and farming, it was the women's task to gather, plant, cultivate, and harvest. It is thought that, because women are under the direct guardianship of the moon, which has the power to make things grow and increase, they alone can make things grow, because they can naturally measure time. Thus, ancient people often considered women as being of the same nature as the moon because of their corresponding monthly cycle (In many languages, the word for menstruation and moon are either the same or closely related, again echoing the close connection between women and the moon), and also because of their tendency to 'swell up' as the moon does. Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.24.

⁶⁸⁷ It has been suggested that women were the first to become conscientious of the cyclical passage of time and developed the calendar because of their natural biological menstrual cycle which correlates with the cycle of the moon. This is probably the reason why the word for month, moon, and menstruation are often connected in many languages. A lunar month has 28 days just as a woman menstruates on a 28 day cycle. The lunar year was therefore composed of 13 months, giving a total of 364 days per year. By adding one day, the lunar year synched up with the solar year. Our earliest calendars seem to be dating to the Upper Palaeolithic period, as early as 25 000 BCE. The Goddess of Laussel, in France (c. 20 000-18 000 BCE), depicts a naked female figure with pendulum breasts and a rising belly. She holds in her right hand a horn, reminiscent of the moon, with 13 notches making a lunar/menstrual year. Her left hand rests on her belly and points to her vulva, perhaps indicating the connection between her vulva and the 13 notches on the horn. In China, women are said to have established the lunar calendar around 1000 BCE. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) made note, in his *History of Animals*, of the rhythmic coincidence between a woman's menstrual cycle and the waxing and waning cycle of the moon. He concluded that the moon would be female. Cashford, *The Moon; Myth and Image*, pp.202-209, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.12-14, plate 33, Grahn, *Blood, Bread, and Roses*, pp.155-156, Walker, *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*, p.645.

⁶⁸⁸ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.78.

⁶⁸⁹ Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', pp.4-5 and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.262.

- ⁶⁹⁰ Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities*, pp.220-21, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.211, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean', p.6, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.6, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.262-263.
- ⁶⁹¹ Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p.39, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean', p.6, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.6, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', p.263.
- ⁶⁹² The Mesopotamian *ishtaritu*, *naditu*, and *entu* were also translated as 'sacred prostitutes'. Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitutes', p.2.
- ⁶⁹³ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', pp.32-33, 47, Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities*, pp.220-21, Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel*, p.211, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean', p.6, Stuckey, 'Priestesses and 'Sacred Prostitutes' in the Ancient Near East', p.8, Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitutes', p.2, and Westenholz, 'Tamar, Qedesa, Qadistu, and Sacred Prostitute in Mesopotamia', pp.262-263.
- ⁶⁹⁴ Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities*, pp.234-35.
- ⁶⁹⁵ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', pp.21-22, Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities*, p.221, and Fisher, 'Cultic Prostitution in the Ancient Near East? A Reassessment', pp.235-236. Cf. Isa 1:21, 57:7-13; Jer 2:20, 3:1-4, 6-10; Ez 16 & 23; Hos 1-3.
- ⁶⁹⁶ Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.39 note 31.
- ⁶⁹⁷ Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, pp.190-191. So the word *zônah* is probably similar to the word 'virgin', which itself does not have the meaning commonly attach to it; in Latin, the correct expression for an untouched virgin, in the modern English sense of the word, is 'virgo intacta', not 'virgo'. The term 'virgin' has been used in connection with ancient goddesses, and may also be applied to women who have had many sexual experiences, as well as to prostitutes. In fact, some of these 'virgins' pledged their sexual life to the service of a goddess and did not use copulation for their own satisfaction or for the ordinary purposes of human life. Rather, their union was dedicated to bringing the fertilizing power of the Goddess into effect. It is clear that they could not be limited to a husband; so being a virgin originally meant unmarried and sexually independent from men. Thus, the term *zônah*, just as 'virgo', can be understood as a 'maiden' or an 'unmarried woman' and stands as a contrast to 'married'. (Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.102-103, 132.) A married man, according to biblical laws, is not guilty of any offence if he has sexual relations with an unmarried woman. Similarly, a single woman may have sexual relations with one or more men, outside the framework of marriage, without violating any explicit sexual prohibition; as long as she is not betrothed or married she does not commit adultery. (Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, p.190.)
- ⁶⁹⁸ Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities*, p.225.
- ⁶⁹⁹ May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.92.
- ⁷⁰⁰ May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', pp.92-93.
- ⁷⁰¹ May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', pp.89-90.
- ⁷⁰² May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.92.
- ⁷⁰³ Teubal, *Ancient Sisterhood*, p.98.
- ⁷⁰⁴ May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.95. Meek discussed in May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.95 note 8.
- ⁷⁰⁵ Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, pp.8, 68.
- ⁷⁰⁶ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.161.
- ⁷⁰⁷ Ahlstrom, 'Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion', p.60 and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, Volume 2, p.503.
- ⁷⁰⁸ Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, pp.8, 68.
- ⁷⁰⁹ Discussed in Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.107-108.
- ⁷¹⁰ Grahn, *Blood, Bread, and Roses*, p.201, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.62-63, and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.226.
- ⁷¹¹ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.83 note 286, 88.
- ⁷¹² Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.62-63 and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.226.
- ⁷¹³ It would seem that the origin of the Rosh ^CHodesh sacred observance is also connected to the women's menstrual cycle, which has a similar monthly cycle as the moon. According to a late Talmudic legend found in the *Yerushalmi*, the Israelite Rosh ^CHodesh holiday was believed to have been awarded to

the women of Israel because of their righteousness when they refused to surrender their jewellery for the creation of the golden calf. Ezrahi, 'The Secret of "IBUR" or Women Cycle, Shabbat and the Moon', pp.3-4, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.62-63, Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.96, Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.226, and Tanenbaum, 'The History and Observance of Rosh Hodesh', p.2.

⁷¹⁴ Cashford, *The Moon; Myth and Image*, pp.218-219, 224-233, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.21-23, and Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.85, 93, 108.

⁷¹⁵ Cashford, *The Moon; Myth and Image*, pp.209-212 and Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.21-23.

⁷¹⁶ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.181 and Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, p.163.

⁷¹⁷ Ezrahi, 'The Secret of "IBUR" or Women Cycle, Shabbat and the Moon', p.3 and Tanenbaum, 'The History and Observance of Rosh Hodesh', p.1.

⁷¹⁸ Discussed in Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.104-105

⁷¹⁹ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, pp.129, 131.

⁷²⁰ Tanenbaum, 'The History and Observance of Rosh Hodesh', pp.1-2.

⁷²¹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.503-504 and Gaster, *Thespis*, p.65.

⁷²² Discussed in Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.213-214.

⁷²³ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.131.

⁷²⁴ Tanenbaum, 'The History and Observance of Rosh Hodesh', pp.1-2, 4-5.

⁷²⁵ Tanenbaum, 'The History and Observance of Rosh Hodesh', pp.4-5. "During the Second Temple period, the new month began when at least two reputable witnesses observed the first sliver of moon. The witnesses were called before the *beit din*, the rabbinic court in Jerusalem, and the judges called each witness separately to testify about the precise location and appearance of the moon. If both gave identical testimony, the *beit din* declared the arrival of Rosh ^CHodesh. Then sacrifices were offered and incense was burnt. Special prayers were chanted, the *shofar* was blown, and a celebratory meal was eaten."

Tanenbaum, 'The History and Observance of Rosh Hodesh', p.2.

⁷²⁶ Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.140-141.

⁷²⁷ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.471, 495-496, 498, 501, 503, Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.64-65, and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.39-40.

⁷²⁸ Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.49-50, 92, 141.

⁷²⁹ Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.3-4, 85, 154, 157, 189.

⁷³⁰ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.503-504 and Gaster, *Thespis*, p.65.

⁷³¹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.503-504.

⁷³² Gaster, *Thespis*, p.65.

⁷³³ Gaster, *Thespis*, p.65 and May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', pp.97-98.

⁷³⁴ Gaster, *Thespis*, p.65 and May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.74.

⁷³⁵ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.503-504 and Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, pp.120-121. Since the religious year always begins at Passover, according to the Lv 23 calendar and the Num 28-29 commentary, it is not clear that this feast is really the New Year festival.

⁷³⁶ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.504 and Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, pp.120-121.

⁷³⁷ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.504, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.65, and Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, pp.120-121.

⁷³⁸ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.504 and Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, pp.120-121.

⁷³⁹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.504, Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.65-66, Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, pp.96-97, Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, pp.120-121, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221.

⁷⁴⁰ Pss 8, 15, 24, 33, 46, 48, 50, 65, 66:1-12, 67, 75, 81, 82, 84, 85, 87, 114, 118, 120-134, 149; Ex 15:1-18.

⁷⁴¹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.504, Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.65-66, Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, pp.96-97, Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, pp.120-121, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221. Mowinkel discussed in Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, p.97 and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221.

⁷⁴² Pss 93:1, 96:10, 97:1, 99:1, 57:9.

⁷⁴³ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.504, Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.65-66, Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, pp.96-97, Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, pp.120-121, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221.

- ⁷⁴⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, p.6 and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.224. Schmidt discussed in Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.224.
- ⁷⁴⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, p.6, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.504, Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.65-66, Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, pp.96-97, Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, pp.120-121, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.221, 224. Mowinckel discussed in Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, p.97 and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221.
- ⁷⁴⁶ Bell, *Ritual*, p.6, Bloom and Rosenberg, *The Book of J*, pp.30-31, and Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology*, p.121. Bloom, base on the various fragments found in the Hebrew Bible, proposed the flowing reconstruction: "... [Yahweh] stretched out the skies like a tent cloth to shroud the Deep, and placed his secret court above the skies, founding it upon the Higher Waters. In creating, Yahweh rode above the Deep, which rose against him. Tehom, queen of the deep, sought to drown out Yahweh's Creation, but he rode against her in his chariot of fire, and bombarded her with hail and with lightning. Yahweh destroyed her vassal Leviathan with one great blow to the monster's skull, while he ended Rahab by thrusting a sword into her heart. The waters fled backward, awed by the voice of Yahweh, and Tehom fearfully surrendered. Yahweh shouted his triumph, and dried up the floods. He set the Moon to divide the seasons, the Sun to divide day and night. Observing Yahweh's victory, the Morning Stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. Thus the word of Creation was completed."
- ⁷⁴⁷ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.502, 504, Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, pp.95-97, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221. "The author of the Ark strand possessed great artistic skill. His account of the travels of the Ark has borrowed motifs of various traditional ancient Near Eastern genres. The story of the Ark's capture and eventual return recalls the descriptions of the capture – and, in some cases, return – of the divine images known from Akkadian and Hittite sources; such accounts could be presented as a form of autobiography of the deity (the so-called Marduk prophecy is an example)." (Van Der Toorn and Houtman, 'David and the Ark', p.225) "Yet for all the stylistic and thematic associations that the author has skilfully woven trough his narrative, it remains at its core a tale about the origins of the ark. By way of an elaborate journey, passing through various stations, the ark of Jerusalem is linked, ultimately, to the temple of Shiloh; and the temple of Shiloh has served, by the same token, as the national sanctuary of pre-monarchic Israel." (Van Der Toorn and Houtman, 'David and the Ark', p.225) So the ritual may have started at Shiloh, the location where the Israelites set camp after conquering Canaan (Josh 18:1). There they divided the land of Canaan between the tribes (Josh 18:10). A temple to Yahweh was also built there (1Sam 14:3; Jer 7:12-14, 26:6, 9), where icons were carried in procession (Jdg 18:15-31) and where the Ark was kept (1Sam 4:3-4). An annual pilgrim to Shiloh was observed (1Sam 1:3, 2:14), where Yahweh had revealed himself (1Sam 3:21), which was a fertility festival (Jdg 21:19-25) reminiscent of the one celebrated by Jephthah's daughter (Jdg 11:37-40). And finally, Yahweh is said to have left Shiloh for Jerusalem (Ps 78:69). Mowinckel discussed in Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, p.97 and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221.
- ⁷⁴⁸ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.502, 504, Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, pp.95-97, and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221.
- ⁷⁴⁹ Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, p.42, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.502, and Kraemer, *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics*, p.63.
- ⁷⁵⁰ Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, p.95.
- ⁷⁵¹ See 2Sam 7:18, 24:18-25; 1Kgs 15:13; 2Kgs 23:4-7; 1Chr 21:18-22:1; 2Chr 23:12-14.
- ⁷⁵² Van Der Toorn and Houtman, 'David and the Ark', p.225.
- ⁷⁵³ Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, p.61.
- ⁷⁵⁴ Coogan, *Stories from Ancient Canaan*, pp.112-113 and Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, p.62.
- ⁷⁵⁵ Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, pp.61-62, Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.27, 36, 54, 189, Porter, 'The Interpretation of 2 Samuel VI and Psalm CXXXII', pp.163-165, Rosenstock, 'David's Play: Fertility Rituals and the Glory of God in 2 Samuel 6', p.66, and Seow, *Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David's Dance*, pp.141-142.
- ⁷⁵⁶ Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, p.62 and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.22-24, 34, 54-55, 83.
- ⁷⁵⁷ Porter, 'The Interpretation of 2 Samuel VI and Psalm CXXXII', pp.165-166, Rosenstock, 'David's Play: Fertility Rituals and the Glory of God in 2 Samuel 6', p.75, and Seow, *Myth, Drama, and the Politics*

of David's Dance, p.137. Rosenstock argued the opposite by saying that David refused to perform the sacred marriage because he did not want to incarnate Yahweh and embody his glory. However, this argument seems to go against the textual evidence. Cf. Rosenstock, 'David's Play: Fertility Rituals and the Glory of God in 2 Samuel 6', pp.74-75.

⁷⁵⁸ Rosenstock, 'David's Play: Fertility Rituals and the Glory of God in 2 Samuel 6', pp.64-65, 71.

⁷⁵⁹ Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, p.62, Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.22-24, 34, 54-55, 83, Porter, 'The Interpretation of 2 Samuel VI and Psalm CXXXII', pp.165-166, and Seow, *Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David's Dance*, p.137. Oesterley goes on to say that, by dancing, the dancer, in this case David, made an offering of his body, and when he reached an ecstatic state, the god, in this case Yahweh would have shown his approval by uniting with or taking temporary possession of the worshiper's body. (Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.25-26.) He also suggests that, as in other cultures in the Eastern Mediterranean where the gods and goddesses were the original dancers who taught humans how to dance, so in Israel Yahweh may have been a dancing-god. He finds evidence of this in the *Midrash*. Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.85-86.

⁷⁶⁰ Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, p.62.

⁷⁶¹ Riesenfeld discussed in Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.79. The story goes on to mention that the child born from that union died young because David had Bathsheba's husband Uzziah killed so that David and Bathsheba could legitimately become a couple. Solomon was born following this event. However, there are scholars that argued that the tale of David and Bathsheba's first child is a fabrication used to cover up Solomon's real birth situation. Knauf, 'The Queens' Story; Bathsheba, Maacah, Athalia and the 'Historia of Early Kings'', pp.11-14.

⁷⁶² Gaster, *Thespis*, pp.66-67 and Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.103.

⁷⁶³ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.502, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.67, and Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, pp.95-96.

⁷⁶⁴ Porter, 'The Interpretation of 2 Samuel VI and Psalm CXXXII', p.168.

⁷⁶⁵ Smith, *The Early History of God*, pp.154-158.

⁷⁶⁶ Grierson and Munro-Hay, *The Ark of the Covenant*, pp.97, 99.

⁷⁶⁷ Discussed in Bell, *Ritual*, p.6.

⁷⁶⁸ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.180-181, 184.

⁷⁶⁹ Bell, *Ritual*, p.6 and Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.224. In the Medieval Jewish tradition, there is "... another version of the marriage of the King and the Shekhinah [which] speaks of an annual cycle. According to this version, as soon as the people of Israel sin, as they do, year after year, their sins add to Samael's (Satan) power, and he glues himself to the Matronit's body and defiles her. Once this happens, the King departs from her and withdraws into the solitude of his heavenly abode. This state continues until, on the Day of Atonement, the scapegoat that is destined for Samael, is killed in the Judean desert. Samael, attracted by the animal offered to him, lets the Matronit go. She can then ascend to heaven and reunite with her brother-husband, the King (Zohar I 64a; III 79a)." (Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.181.)

⁷⁷⁰ Porter, 'The Interpretation of 2 Samuel VI and Psalm CXXXII', p.168, Rosenstock, 'David's Play: Fertility Rituals and the Glory of God in 2 Samuel 6', p.67, and Van Der Toorn and Houtman, 'David and the Ark', p.225.

⁷⁷¹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.507 and Gaster, *Thespis*, p.65.

⁷⁷² Discussed in Nash, 'Devils, Demons, and Disease: Folklore in Ancient Near Eastern Rites of Atonement', pp.58, 71, 82-83.

⁷⁷³ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.507-508 and Gaster, *Thespis*, p.65.

⁷⁷⁴ According to the Bible (Lv 16:7-10, 20-22, 26, 29-30), when Israel wandered in the wilderness, where the god Azazel dwelt, Yahweh ordered Moses' brother, Aaron, to annually celebrate the Day of Atonement. The first ceremony was a goat sacrifice, chosen by lot from a pair of goats, which was offered to Yahweh, while the other went to Azazel. However, there is a second ritual recorded, which is different both in spirit and in origin, and was later combined with the 'goat' ritual to be also performed on that day. This Levitical priestly ritual demanded the sacrificing of a bull to Yahweh, for the high priest's own sinfulness, and that of his 'house'. While the text clearly identifies the Aaronite priesthood, the actual Jerusalem high priest was a Zadokite. Therefore, this ritual is obviously a late addition incorporated into the Yom Kippur celebrations. Since the Aaronites were priests at Samaria in the Northern kingdom, the rite was most likely the result of their integration into the southern Judahite priesthood following the fall of

Samaria to the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser (c. 722 BCE) (2Kgs 17:23, 18:9-12). (Beltz, *God and the Gods*, p.214 and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.507.) Nevertheless, the text continues and states that the high priest then entered the Holy of Holies (*debir*), incense burner at hand, and incensed and sprinkled the mercy-seat (*kapporeth*) with the bull's blood (vv. 11-14). The text further states that only the high priest alone could enter the Holy of Holies, and only on the great Day of Atonement (Lv 16:15; Heb 9:7). This same late Priestly law also states that only the priests could enter into the Temple's court. While laymen could bring their sacrifices to the court entrance, they were not permitted to cross the threshold (Lv 1:5; Joel 2:17; Ez 44:3, 46:2). (De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.276, 507, and Hurowitz, 'Inside Solomon's Temple', p.31.)

⁷⁷⁵ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.507-509.

⁷⁷⁶ Nash, 'Devils, Demons, and Disease: Folklore in Ancient Near Eastern Rites of Atonement', pp.58, 71, 82-83.

⁷⁷⁷ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.507-508. Lv 16:33 combined, in inverted order, the two expiation ceremonies.

⁷⁷⁸ Beltz, *God and the Gods*, p.214, De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.508, and Nash, 'Devils, Demons, and Disease: Folklore in Ancient Near Eastern Rites of Atonement', p.68.

⁷⁷⁹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.508-509 and Morgenstern, 'Two Ancient Israelite Agricultural Festivals', pp.48-49.

⁷⁸⁰ Discussed in Nash, *Devils, Demons, and Disease: Folklore in Ancient Near Eastern Rites of Atonement*', pp.68-69.

⁷⁸¹ Nash, *Devils, Demons, and Disease: Folklore in Ancient Near Eastern Rites of Atonement*', pp.68-69.

⁷⁸² De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.508-509 and Nash, *Devils, Demons, and Disease: Folklore in Ancient Near Eastern Rites of Atonement*', pp.67-68. Driver discussed in Nash, *Devils, Demons, and Disease: Folklore in Ancient Near Eastern Rites of Atonement*', p.68.

⁷⁸³ Beltz, *God and the Gods*, p.215.

⁷⁸⁴ Beltz, *God and the Gods*, pp.214-215 and Nash, *Devils, Demons, and Disease: Folklore in Ancient Near Eastern Rites of Atonement*, p.67. "In the fertility cult of Arcadia, Pan was also considered to be a mythologem for the 'devil' or 'the upright man', who was clad in a goatskin and accompanied the maenads on their orgiastic processions. He was also considered a master of prophecy and flute-playing. Apollo acquired his proficiency in these two arts from Pan. Just as Pan was defeated by Zeus and took on the form of a goat, so Azazel was defeated by Yahweh." (Beltz, *God and the Gods*, p.215.)

⁷⁸⁵ Beltz, *God and the Gods*, p.215 and De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.509.

⁷⁸⁶ Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess*, pp.82-83.

⁷⁸⁷ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.125.

⁷⁸⁸ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.7, 126.

⁷⁸⁹ Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess*, p.82.

⁷⁹⁰ Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess*, p.83.

⁷⁹¹ Discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.7, 126.

⁷⁹² Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.100, Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess*, p.83, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.177.

⁷⁹³ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.471, 495-496, 498, 501 and May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.94. See Hos 2:10; Num 18:12; Dt 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; Jer 31:12; Joel 1:7; Hag 1:11; Neh 5:11; 10:40, etc.; cf. Song 2:4.

⁷⁹⁴ May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.94.

⁷⁹⁵ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.471, 495-496, 498, 501. See also Jdg 21:19-21 for young girls dancing in the vineyards at the feast of Yahweh on the Day of Atonement, also mentioned in the *Mishnah* (*Taanith* IV, 8) and see further the story of Jephthah's daughter (Jdg 11:37-40) and the *Song of Songs*.

⁷⁹⁶ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.501, Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.226-227, and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.140.

⁷⁹⁷ The Israelite town of Abel-mecholah was probably a site where festival dancing took place on a regular basis, since its name mean 'the field of dancing' (1Kgs 19:16).

⁷⁹⁸ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, p.501, Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', pp.226-227, and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.142.

Best noted that Genesis 6:14 makes the use of the term *etz gipar* when describing the construction of Noah's ark. Not knowing what it could mean, the word *gipar* has been transliterated into Hebrew as *g-p-r*, later vocalized in English as 'gopher'. So the entire expression, *etz gipar*, was translated as 'gopher wood', since the word *etz* means wood or things made of wood. It is possible that *gipar* may have meant pasture or meadow, thus literally referring to meadow wood. When the text was translated into Greek, the Septuagint rendered *gipar* as 'square', meaning trimmed lumber (LXX Gen 6:15). However, in Greek, it has also been suggested that it may be related to *kopher* 'pitch' or *kuparissos* 'cypress'. Finally, some scholars have suggested that *etz gipar* was a reed material used for building houses near the marshes in ancient Sumer. They were built using bundles of reeds, and, prior to 1978, this technique was still being used until cement block houses became cheaper. These reed houses were the forerunners of the sacred *gipar*, which was the residence of a priest or priestess where the sacred marriage was enacted. The Hebrew translator of the *P* source probably refrained from translating it as 'priest-house' when finding *gipar* in his source document for his Genesis Flood tale. Best, *Noah's Ark and the Ziusudra Epic*, p.95.

⁸⁰⁰ Simkins, 'Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth', pp.39, 50.

⁸⁰¹ Patai, *Gates of the Old City*, pp.450-452, Petersen, 'Genesis 6:1-4), Yahweh and the Organization of the Cosmos', p.50, and Wenham, 'Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story', p.403. In Jewish folklore, it was believed that the Matronit Shekhinah and her brother-bridegroom, the King Yahweh, were married and that their wedding was celebrated after Solomon had built the Temple in Jerusalem, which served as their palace, while the Holy of Holies was their wedding chamber and bedroom (Zohar I 49a, III 74b). It is said that every midnight, or, according to other tales, every Sabbath night or even annually on the Day of Atonement, as long as the Temple stood, the King came down from his heavenly abode to find his wife on her couch, set up in the Temple, surrounded by her maidens. The whole world's well-being depended on this holy union in the sacred bedchamber. (Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.180.)

⁸⁰² Grossman, 'Women and the Jerusalem Temple', pp.22-24, 27, and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.143.

⁸⁰³ Gaster, *Thespis*, p.66, Grossman, 'Women and the Jerusalem Temple', p.22, and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.143.

⁸⁰⁴ Grossman, 'Women and the Jerusalem Temple', pp.23-24, 27.

⁸⁰⁵ Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.35. However, we do have evidence of circle dances performed by the Greeks where both sexes were dancing together, and this, at times, did seem to have led to illicit sexual activities. Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.105.

⁸⁰⁶ Gaster, *Thespis*, p.66, Grossman, 'Women and the Jerusalem Temple', pp.22-24, and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.157-158.

⁸⁰⁷ Gaster, *Thespis*, p.66, Grossman, 'Women and the Jerusalem Temple', pp.22-24, Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, XIII, pp.51-52, and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.157-158.

⁸⁰⁸ Gaster, *Thespis*, p.66, Grossman, 'Women and the Jerusalem Temple', pp.22-24, and Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, pp.142, 158.

⁸⁰⁹ Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.101. The New Year was celebrated on the New Moon; that is when the Asif Festival began. And then, around the 15th, at Sukkot, it was the Full Moon, which is the day when the goddess was thought to menstruate. This may also be significant in relation to the text, because the menstruation of the goddess would correspond to the Flood in the text, marking the beginning of the rainy season in Israel. Grahn perceived a menstruation ritual in the Flood story. She argued that the Flood myth makes a promise of the sky 'menstruation', or monsoon (moon's rain), a cyclical occurrence, causing the seasonal overflow of rivers and lakes. (Grahn, *Blood, Bread, and Roses*, pp.222-224.) She also brought attention to a particular pattern in the various Flood stories. Referring specifically to the biblical Flood, at the end of the tale, Noah three times sent out a white dove from the ark, which finally found dry land. She pointed out this event's similarity with the ancient Hebrew tradition of taking white doves to the temple for sacrifice at the end of the woman's seven days of menstrual seclusion, in payment of the blood debt of consciousness (Lv 15:28-29; cf. Bathsheba in 2Sam 11:1-5). This would have marked the end of the moon-goddess' menstruation. (Grahn, *Blood, Bread, and Roses*, p.183.)

⁸¹⁰ Hiebert, 'The Yahwist Landscape', pp.46-47.

⁸¹¹ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.494, Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p.168, Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', pp.109-110, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, p.158. Gressman discussed in Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p.168.

- ⁸¹² Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.496, 498, Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.87, note 2, 89, Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.7, Cook, *The Tree of Life*, pp.76, 121, and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.225. Von Rad discussed in Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.7. Wyatt discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.225. The argument has been put forth that the original story consisted of only one tree. However, as the story was handed down through oral tradition, some argue that two main strands probably developed, and each attached different attributes to the mystical tree motif. When the Yahwist wrote down the story, she integrated both strands into one narrative, causing this duality of trees. Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, pp.102-103, 129-130, 171.
- ⁸¹³ Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.11.
- ⁸¹⁴ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.497.
- ⁸¹⁵ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.496 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.112.
- ⁸¹⁶ Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.24 note 13.
- ⁸¹⁷ Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.54.
- ⁸¹⁸ Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.39, 41, 43.
- ⁸¹⁹ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.496, 498.
- ⁸²⁰ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.496, Chernin, *Reinventing Eve*, p.156, and Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.35.
- ⁸²¹ Van Gennepe, *The Rites of Passage*, p.29.
- ⁸²² Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.496, Chernin, *Reinventing Eve*, p.156, and Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.35.
- ⁸²³ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.496 and Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.35.
- ⁸²⁴ Fuller, *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scriptures* and Porter, 'The Interpretation of 2 Samuel VI and Psalm CXXXII', p.168. Taylor argued that the *asherah* pole was a pruned tree, probably an almond tree, that was stylized to have three branches on each side, from which was later developed the Menorah. However, this *asherah* stylized tree was always a living tree, since it was supposed to represent the goddess in her life giving form. Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', pp.29-54.
- ⁸²⁵ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.496-497, Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.91, 102, Boomershtine, 'Rhetoric in Genesis 2-3', p.123, Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.8, Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p.289, and Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.35. Gaster discussed in Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.8.
- ⁸²⁶ Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.90-91.
- ⁸²⁷ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.496-497, Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.8, and Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p.289.
- ⁸²⁸ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.499.
- ⁸²⁹ Discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.265. These twin peaks, located in the west, were also associated with the gates to the underworld, between which the sun god Melqart descended in the evening. These mountains were symbolically represented in the stylized columns at the entrance of his temple in Tyre. In Jerusalem, the Joachim and Boaz pillars, at the entrance of the Temple, may have depicted the same concept of the heavenly gate. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, pp.145, 243, Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.150, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.89, Hurowitz, 'Inside Solomon's Temple', p.27, Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.85, and Warmington, *Carthage*, p.80.
- ⁸³⁰ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.462, 501, Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.9, Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, pp.274-275, Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp.123, 128-129, 132, and Murison, 'The Serpent in the Old Testament', pp.125-126. Crossan discussed in Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.9.
- ⁸³¹ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.462, 501, Boomershtine, 'Rhetoric in Genesis 2-3', pp.126-129, Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.81, 90, Collins, 'The Bible and Sexuality', pp.154-155, 157, Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp.123, 128-129, 132, and Murison, 'The Serpent in the Old Testament', pp.125-126.
- ⁸³² Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.462, 501, Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.8, Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp.123, 128-129, 132, and Murison, 'The Serpent in the Old Testament', pp.125-126. Gaster discussed in Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.8.

- 833 Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.9-10 and Walsh, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Synchronic Approach', p.165.
- 834 Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.35 and Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', pp.99-100.
- 835 Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', pp.99-100.
- 836 Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, pp.288-289.
- 837 Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p.289.
- 838 Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.214.
- 839 Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, p.88.
- 840 Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.216. Hos 4:13 Dt 12:2; 1Kgs 14:23; 2Kgs 16:4; 17:10; Isa 57:5-7; Jer 2:20; 3:6, 13; 17:2; Ez 6:13; 20:28.
- 841 Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.212 and Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.34.
- 842 Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.127.
- 843 Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.212.
- 844 Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.214, 218, 226. Widengren is discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.226.
- 845 Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.226-227. "Sexuality and studying texts are associated in Jewish mysticism as well, according to which, the mystic is able to unite with the Torah, i.e., with the Word of God and thus with God Himself. This union is described in sexual terms since the mystic is seen to be uniting with the Torah as God's feminine manifestation, the *Shekhinah*. The Kabbalist becomes a mystical husband of the Torah in order to receive the ultimate, Kabbalistic meaning of the text." Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.227.
- 846 Discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.226. See also Jezebel's garden (1Kgs 21:1-16).
- 847 *The Forgotten Books of Eden*, p.246 and Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.224. Wyatt discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.224.
- 848 *The Forgotten Books of Eden*, p.246, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.224, Stager, 'Jerusalem as Eden', pp.37, 47, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.317-319, 333. Wyatt discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.224.
- 849 Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.226.
- 850 Stager, 'Jerusalem as Eden', pp.37, 47, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.317-319, 333.
- 851 Bell, *Ritual*, pp.10-11 and Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.x-xiv, 59, 62, 129
- 852 Gaster, *Thespis*, p.83.
- 853 Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221, Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.69, and Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', p.108. Gunkel discussed in Oden, *The Bible Without Theology*, p.69. Mowinckel discussed in Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.221.
- 854 Greenberg, 'The Generations of the Heavens and of the Earth', p.2.
- 855 Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.32.
- 856 Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.4-5.
- 857 Bell, *Ritual*, p.56.
- 858 Benjamin, 'Israel's God: Mother and Midwife', p.117 and Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.51, 61-62, 64-65, 132.
- 859 Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 42, 95, Henderson and Oakes, *The Wisdom of the Serpent*, pp.48-49, Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.94-95, 102-103, 169-170, 172, 201, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.15-16, 21, 25, 109.
- 860 Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.51, 61-62, 64-65, 132.
- 861 Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 42, 95, Henderson and Oakes, *The Wisdom of the Serpent*, pp.48-49, Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.94-95, 102-103, 169-170, 172, 201, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.15-16, 21, 25, 109.
- 862 Gaster, *Thespis*, p.43.
- 863 Bell, *Ritual*, p.42, Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos*, pp.30-31, and Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.95, 102, 106-107, 134, 146, 169.
- 864 Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos*, p.33.

- ⁸⁶⁵ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 95, Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.4, 8-9, Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.94-95, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.15-16, 21.
- ⁸⁶⁶ Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.x, xii-xiv, 1, 52, 66, 103, 131-132.
- ⁸⁶⁷ Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.84-86 and Gunkel, *Genesis*, pp.30-31.
- ⁸⁶⁸ Gunkel, *Genesis*, pp.30-31 and Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', pp.102, 107-108.
- ⁸⁶⁹ Gunkel, *Genesis*, pp.30-31, 35, and Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', pp.99-100, 102, 107-108.
- ⁸⁷⁰ Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', p.106 and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.326-327.
- ⁸⁷¹ Biale, *Women and Jewish Law*, p.175 and Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', pp.102, 107-108.
- ⁸⁷² Discussed in Bell, *Ritual*, pp.10-11.
- ⁸⁷³ Boomershine, 'The Structure of Narrative Rhetoric in Genesis 2-3', p.126, Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.12-13, McKenzie, 'The Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2-3', pp.563, 570-571, Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', pp.102, 107-108, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.108.
- ⁸⁷⁴ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, pp.75-76 and Qualls-Corbett, *The Sacred Prostitute*, pp.84, 87.
- ⁸⁷⁵ Discussed in Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.73.
- ⁸⁷⁶ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.133.
- ⁸⁷⁷ Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.51, 61-62, 64-65, 132 and Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos*, p.36.
- ⁸⁷⁸ Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.73.
- ⁸⁷⁹ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.174-175.
- ⁸⁸⁰ Bell, *Ritual*, p.42, Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, p.219, and Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.95, 102-103, 134, 167, 169-170, 172, 201.
- ⁸⁸¹ Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.131.
- ⁸⁸² Bechtel, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Myth about Human Maturation', pp.19-20.
- ⁸⁸³ Bailey, 'Initiation and Primal Woman', p.149.
- ⁸⁸⁴ Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, pp.x, xii-xiv, 1, 52, 66, 103, 131-132.
- ⁸⁸⁵ Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.45.
- ⁸⁸⁶ Barber, *Women's Work*, p.252.
- ⁸⁸⁷ Barber, *Women's Work*, p.53.
- ⁸⁸⁸ Barber, *Women's Work*, pp.55, 59, 68-69.
- ⁸⁸⁹ Barber, *Women's Work*, p.54 and Cashford, *The Moon; Myth and Image*, p.215.
- ⁸⁹⁰ Barber, *Women's Work*, p.55.
- ⁸⁹¹ Barber, *Women's Work*, p.56.
- ⁸⁹² Barber, *Women's Work*, pp.55, 59.
- ⁸⁹³ Barber, *Women's Work*, pp.60-61 and Homer, *The Iliad*, p.195.
- ⁸⁹⁴ Barber, *Women's Work*, pp.55, 59, 65, 68-69.
- ⁸⁹⁵ Barber, *Women's Work*, pp.59-60, 65, 69.
- ⁸⁹⁶ At Ebla, the earth-goddess is attested many times in offering lists, and there she was named Adamma. The name has a Semitic etymology and may refer to an ancient Syrian earth-deity also found in the biblical texts. During the 2nd millennia, her cult was very popular amongst the Hurites, where she was identified with the goddess Kupapa/Cybele. Adamma was also worshipped at Ugarit and Emar. From the archaeological evidence, her absence from personal piety seems to indicate that she was exclusively worshipped on an official and dynastic level, associating her specifically with royalty. In fact, the queen is specifically and repeatedly mention in the offering list as bringing gifts for the goddess. Pomponio and Xella, *Les Dieux d'Ébla*, pp.10-15. Because of her exclusivity to the elite circle, it is possible that, after being appropriate by the Ugaritic and the Levantine cultus, sometime during the 1st millennia, she may have become identified with Athirat, especially when considering the close relationship between the queen and both Athirat and Adamma in the Canaan area.

- ⁸⁹⁷ Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.10, Davidson, 'Theology of Sexuality', p.6, Pomponio and Xella, *Les Dieux d'Ébla*, pp.10-15, and Simkins, 'Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth', p.44.
- ⁸⁹⁸ Simkins, 'Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth', p.44.
- ⁸⁹⁹ Benjamin, 'Israel's God: Mother and Midwife', p.119.
- ⁹⁰⁰ Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.39, McKenzie, 'The Literary Characteristic of Genesis 2-3', p.557, and Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.89.
- ⁹⁰¹ Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.89.
- ⁹⁰² Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.7 and Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.89. Jobling discussed in Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.7.
- ⁹⁰³ Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.6, 10.
- ⁹⁰⁴ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 95, Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.94-95, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.109.
- ⁹⁰⁵ Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.39, Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage*, p.90, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.89, and Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', pp.105-106.
- ⁹⁰⁶ Bechtel, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Myth About Human Maturation', pp.22-23 and Teubal, *Sarah the Priestess*, p.60. Following Wallace, and expanding on his research, I would propose to read Gen 4:1-2a as follow (my translation):
- (a) "The adam knew his woman 'hawah;
 - (b) She conceived and gave birth to Cain.
 - (c) Saying 'I have created a man with Yahweh',
 - (d) She then gave birth to his brother Abel."
- Eve herself declares her relation to Yahweh in her statement in line c. Contrary to most commentaries, who see in the word 'create' (*qaniti*) an echo of the name Cain, I would argue that lines a and b should be paired, while line c should relate to line d, therefore a poetic mirror between lines a and c, and b and d. This would further emphasize Eve's connection with Asherah, who herself was known by the epithet *ganyt ilim*, 'creatress of the gods'. In this way, the younger of the twins (notice only one 'conception' yet two 'births'), Abel, is the fruit of the sacred marriage, as Eve herself states, the 'son' of the god Yahweh. (Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, p.158.) There are many mythological twins where one is sired by a god while the other by a mortal man, usually a king. Typically, the one sired by the god is semi-divine. See for example Castor & Pollux; Clytemnestra & Helen; Iphikles & Herakles.
- ⁹⁰⁷ Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.132.
- ⁹⁰⁸ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 40, 42, 95, Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.94-95, 102-103, 169-170, 172, 201, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.48, 54, 62, 109.
- ⁹⁰⁹ Bailey, 'Initiation and the Primal Woman', p.150, Bechtel, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Myth about Human Maturation', p.25, Benjamin, 'Israel's God: Mother and Midwife', p.119, Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.6, Ramsey, 'Is Name-Giving an Act of Domination in Genesis 2:23 and Elsewhere?', pp.31-32, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, pp.157-158.
- ⁹¹⁰ Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.45.
- ⁹¹¹ Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.6, 10 and Simkins, 'Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth', p.49.
- ⁹¹² Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.52 and Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.35.
- ⁹¹³ Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.6, 10 and Simkins, 'Gender Construction in the Yahwist Creation Myth', p.49.
- ⁹¹⁴ Bechtel, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Myth about Human Maturation', p.20, Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24', pp.84-86, and Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.12.
- ⁹¹⁵ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.492, Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, p.25, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.65-68, Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and Feminist Readings of the Garden of Eden', p.19, and Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp.108-109. However, Meek proposed that the connection between the name Yahweh and the verb 'to be' found in Exodus 3:14 is a superficial Hebrew connection, because the name Yahweh is early Arabic and probably stems from the verb 'to blow' (*hwy*), which may be connect to his ability as a storm-god. Yet, Meek does mention that it is possible that the name Yahweh was derived from the verb 'to be', only not from the Hebrew, but from the Semitic *hwy*. (Meek, *Hebrew Origins*, pp.108-109.) Cross picked up on this last point and went further. He suggested

that the word *yahweh* was part of a cultic 'sentence name' that is common in the ancient Near East. Thus, he understood the word *yahweh* as meaning 'to cause to be' or plainly as 'to create' and the name Yahweh developed from sentence names such as *yahweh tseba 'ot yoseb kerubim*, 'He who creates the heavenly armies (divine hosts) and is enthroned on the kerubim' (1Sam 4:4; 2Sam 6:2), which is obviously connected to the iconography of the Ark of the Covenant and the Jerusalem Temple, though the latter succeeded the shrine of Shiloh. Cross when on to argue that this sentence name was originally an epithet of the Canaanite god El. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.65-75.

⁹¹⁶ Jobling discussed in Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.7.

⁹¹⁷ There is also evidence that the name *'hawah* is etymologically connected to the word for serpent in Semitic languages, a connection observed as early as the rabbis in their commentary the *Midrash Rabba* and the *Jerusalem Targum*. Bronner, *From Eve to Esther*, p.25, Collins, *From the Ashes of Angels*, pp.40-41, Grant, *The History of Ancient Israel*, p.99, Jastrow, 'Adam and Eve in Babylonian Literature', p.209, Kimelman, 'The Seduction of Eve and Feminist Readings of the Garden of Eden', pp.19, 36, Layton, 'Remarks on the Canaanite Origin of Eve', p.29, Murison, 'The Serpent in the Old Testament', pp.118, 130, Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin*, p.26, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, p.157.

⁹¹⁸ I would like to thank Douglas Frayne for bringing this connection to my attention.

⁹¹⁹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', p.398, Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, p.169, Bechtel, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Myth about Human Maturation', p.25 note 40, Burns, 'Dream Form in Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.7, Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p.261, Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.52, Layton, 'Remarks on the Canaanite Origin of Eve', p.30, Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*, p.71, and Wenham, 'Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story', p.401.

⁹²⁰ Niditch, *Chaos to Cosmos*, pp.33-34 and Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.106-107.

⁹²¹ Bell, *Ritual*, p.95 and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, pp.15-16, 19-21, 23-25.

⁹²² Grimes, *Marrying & Burying*, p.196 and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.177.

⁹²³ Bell, *Ritual*, pp.36, 95, Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp.94-95, and Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, p.109.

⁹²⁴ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.504-505, Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.104, Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.235, Oesterley, *Sacred Dance in the Ancient World*, p.42, and Stager, 'Jerusalem as Eden', pp.45-46.

⁹²⁵ Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, p.xiii.

⁹²⁶ Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.226.

⁹²⁷ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*; Volume 2, pp.504-505, Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.235, and Stager, 'Jerusalem as Eden', pp.45-46.

⁹²⁸ Bloom and Rosenberg, *The Book of J*, pp.30-31.

⁹²⁹ Note that in the Psalm passage, the sun (god?) is the groom who comes out of the bridal chamber (*'huppah*), while in the Joel passage, Yahweh and his bride (*Asherah?*) are enticed to come out of the bridal chamber, located on Zion (the Temple Mount), by the whole population (man, woman, and children) gathered around. Again, here we have Yahweh/sun-god connection. The *Book of Joel* continues and states that, when Yahweh comes out of the wedding-chamber, he proclaims: "I shall send you corn, new wine, and oil, and you will have plenty... Fear not, you beasts in the field; for the open pastures will be green, the trees will bear fruit, the fig and the vine yield their harvest." (Joel 2:19-22) At this announcement, the people of Zion are told to rejoice, to "be glad in the Lord your god, who gives you food in due measure by sending you rain, the autumn and spring rains as of old. The threshing-floors will be heaped with grain, the vats will overflow with new wine and oil." (Joel 2:23-24) The imagery is obvious, and its resemblance to the Mesopotamian sacred marriage ritual cannot be denied.

⁹³⁰ The prominence of the couch, located in the Near Eastern goddess shrine chamber, is well known from Babylonian and Sumerian sources. It is also present in the Hebrew *mishchavi* (Isa 57:7; Ez 23:17; and Song 3:1), attesting to the similarities between these cults. These couches were primarily associated with the god and goddess' sacred marriage, a ritual also present in the Israelite fertility cult. (May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', pp.79-80.)

⁹³¹ In the *Iddin-Dagan hymn A*, we are told that the fire-god Gibil prepared Inanna's Eanna shrine in Uruk by purifying the couch. Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, p.41. While I believe that the Zadokite high-priest (*kohen harosh* or *haggadol*) would have incarnated the snake during the Judahite

sacred marriage, I think that the 'second priest' (*kohen mishne*), probably a Levite, was responsible for the sacred fire and embodied the fire-god for the ceremony. The name of this fire-god in the biblical text appears to have been Lahat (Gen 3:24; cf. Ps 104:4). Hendel, "'The Flame of the Whirling Sword": A Note on Genesis 3:24', pp.671-674.

⁹³² Bechtel, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Myth about Human Maturation', p.13 and Bechtel, 'Rethinking the Interpretation of Genesis 2:4b-3:24', p.101.

⁹³³ The meaning of the word *hekal* is 'palace' and 'temple' in both Hebrew and Phoenician. The origin of the word is not Semitic, but rather Sumerian from E-gal, meaning 'big house'. It later was called the 'Holy Place'. De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 2*, pp.313-314, Hurowitz, 'Inside Solomon's Temple', p.27, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.322-323.

⁹³⁴ The word *debir* probably derived from an Egyptian word for 'back room', also found in Arabic. The *debir* may either have had a loft above it, or it was raised and approached by steps. The West-Semitic root *dbir*, meaning 'to speak, to act', gave rise to the traditional rendering of 'oracle', and may have possibly been designed for chthonian divination. De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 2*, pp.313-314, Hurowitz, 'Inside Solomon's Temple', p.27, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.322-323.

⁹³⁵ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 2*, pp.504-505, Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.235, and Stager, 'Jerusalem as Eden', pp.45-46. See also 2Sam 6; 1Kgs 8, Pss 24; 132.

⁹³⁶ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 2*, pp.504-505, Johnson, 'Hebrew Conceptions of Kingship', p.235, and Stager, 'Jerusalem as Eden', pp.45-46.

⁹³⁷ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel; Volume 2*, p.349. It has also been noted that, in the biblical tradition, as in the ancient Eastern Mediterranean and Near East, the day of the New Moon was predisposed for oracles. (Ez 26:1; 29:17; 31:1; 32:1; Hag 1:1; Isa 47:13) Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.105.

⁹³⁸ The Serpent Stone beside the spring of En-rogel (1Kgs 1:9) of the river Gihon in Jerusalem (1Kgs 1:33, 38, 45) is evidence of serpent worship, which may identify this Jebusite serpent-god as the river-god upon whom the entire population of Jerusalem was dependent for drinkable water. (Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', pp.137, 141.)

⁹³⁹ Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.138.

Conclusion:

⁹⁴⁰ Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.196 and Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.153. The female *yoshevoth* weeping for Tammuz (Ez 8:14) are but one example that the Israelites knew of other cultural stories, beliefs, and rituals, and incorporated them into their own practices. (May, 'The Fertility Cult in Hosea', p.77.)

⁹⁴¹ Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, pp.196-197.

⁹⁴² Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.85.

⁹⁴³ The pre-exilic prophets expressed cultic awareness of the national guilt in moral terms of transgression, iniquity, rebelliousness, and social irresponsibility. (Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.237, 335.)

⁹⁴⁴ Gaster, *Thespis*, p.83, Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp.153-155, Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', p.111, and Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', pp.237, 335.

⁹⁴⁵ Boomershtine, 'The Structure of Narrative Rhetoric in Genesis 2-3', p.127, Gaster, *Thespis*, p.83, McKenzie, 'The Literary Characteristics of Genesis 2-3', p.561, Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', pp.100, 111, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, pp.170-171.

⁹⁴⁶ Boomershtine, 'The Structure of Narrative Rhetoric in Genesis 2-3', p.129.

⁹⁴⁷ Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', p.111.

⁹⁴⁸ Terrien, 'The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew Religion', p.335.

⁹⁴⁹ Ahlstrom, *Aspects of Syncretism in Israelite Religion*, p.82 and Soggin, 'The Fall of Man in the Third Chapter of Genesis', p.111.

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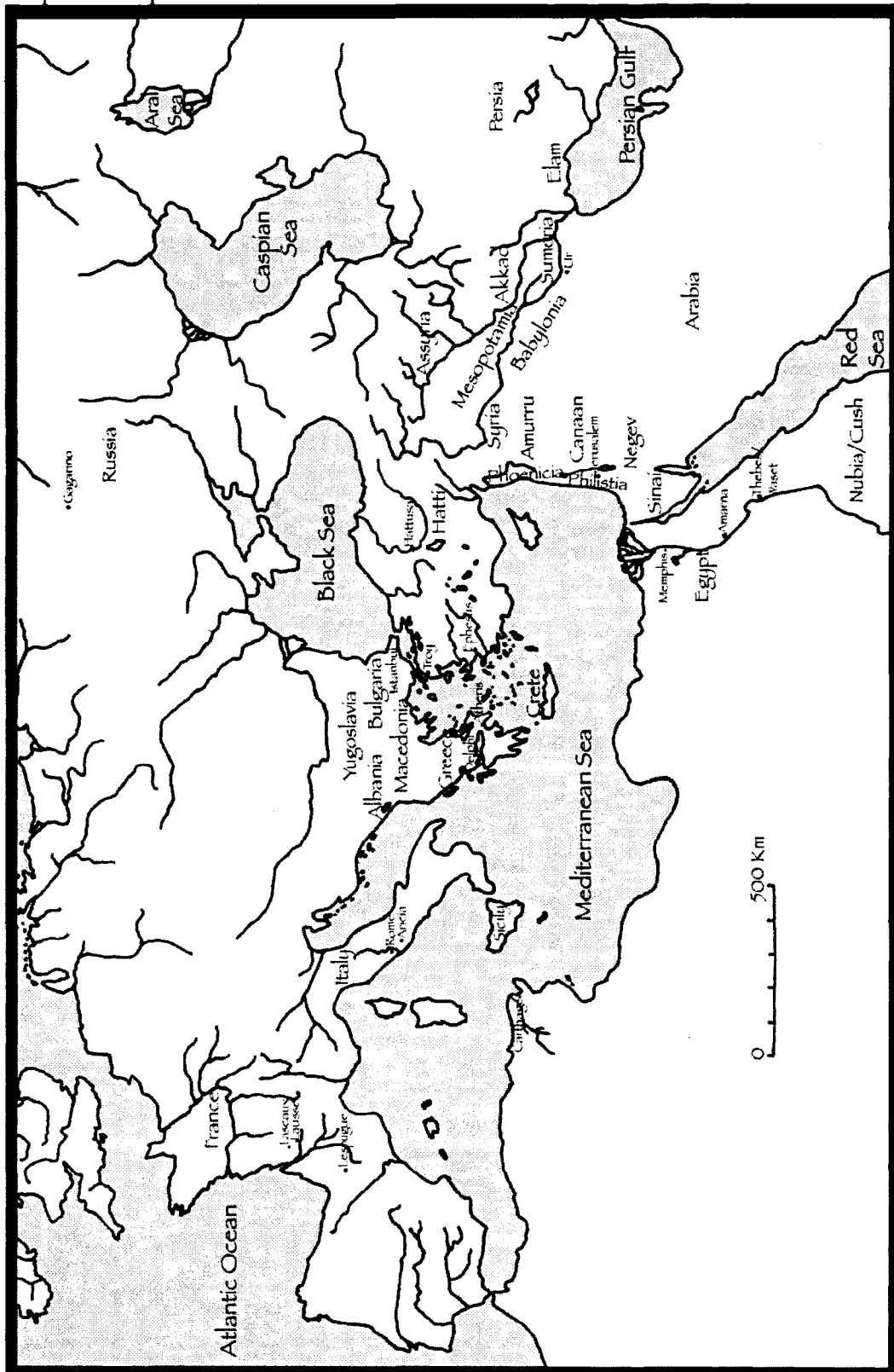
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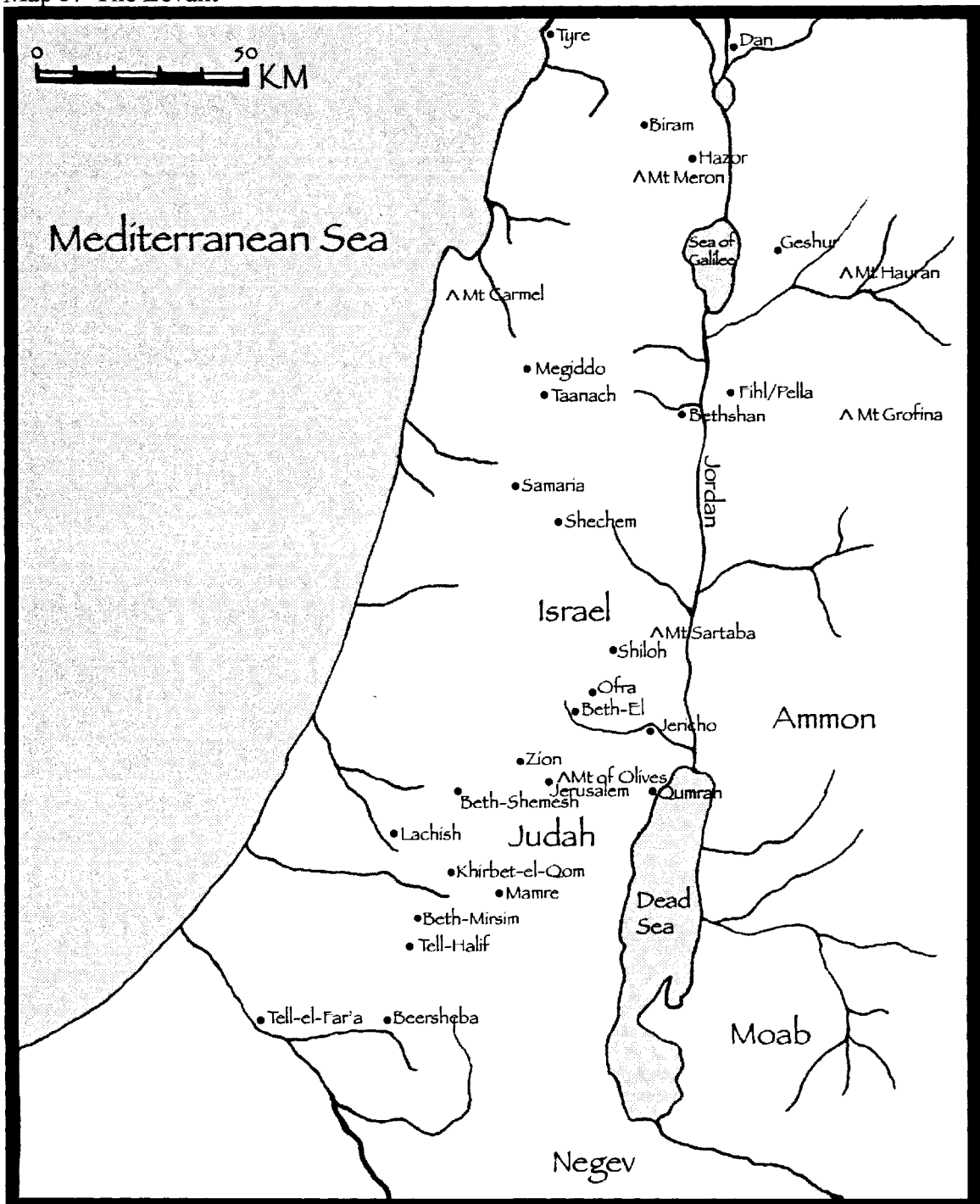
APPENDIX 1:

Map 1: Europe and the Near and Middle East



This map illustrates the ancient Near East and its surrounding regions. The Black Sea is located to the north, the Mediterranean Sea to the west, and the Persian Gulf to the east. The Red Sea is situated to the south. Major regions shown include Assyria, Akkadia, Sumeria, Elam, Persia, Arabia, Egypt, and Hatti. Key cities and locations are marked with dots, including Istanbul, Troy, Ephesus, Hieropolis, Emar, Ebla, Kadesh, Amurru, Hazor, Hauran, Philistia, Jerusalem, Samaria, Negev, Kuntillet Ajrud, Wilderness of Zin, Elath, Aqaba, Sinai, Amarna, Thebes/Waset, and Memphis. Rivers such as the Tigris, Euphrates, and Nile are depicted. The map also shows the Caspian Sea, Persian Gulf, and Red Sea.

Map 3: The Levant



APPENDIX 2

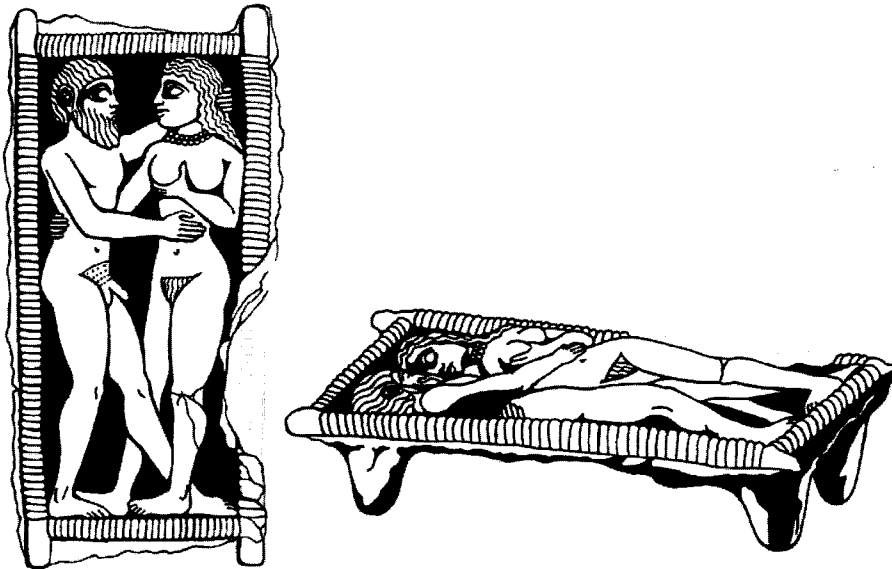


Figure 1:

‘Lovers
embracing on
a bed’,
terracotta,
Mesopotamia,
c. 2000 BCE.
© S. Beaulieu,
after Teubal
1983:117,
Plate 19.

This artefact may be a votive image representing the enactment of the sacred marriage in the carefully prepared nuptial bed hewn from the tree of life. I was unable to find an actual image dating to the Neolithic era; however these Sumerian plaques attest to the continuing motif. We can clearly see the man cupping his partner's head in his hand, and resting his other hand on her stomach. She, in turn, has one arm around his waist, and with her other hand she offers him her breast. They may be representation of the religious experts incarnating the divine couple during this key moment in the ritual. In some variations the priest is bald, or the priestess has no necklace, or the couple kiss passionately, or, finally, the couple is sometimes depicted fully dressed and elaborately adorned and coiffed.¹ Certainly, on the plaques where the couple is depicted nude, there is a lack of iconography indicating divine connection (aside perhaps for the necklace the woman wears). This has caused some scholars to question their connection with the cult.² However, as mentioned, there is a ‘dressed’ version, and there the iconography is quite visible. Further, the votive plaque could have been bought by worshippers during the festival and brought back home as an amulet to bless their house and home with fertility. The reverse may also be possible, where worshippers brought these votive images as offerings to the temple. Both scenarios seem likely to have been the situation. Numerous plaques of this type have been found throughout Mesopotamia dating at least from the Isin-Larsa-Old Babylonia period; c. 2000-1600 BCE. At the temple of Inanna/Ishtar, at the city of Ashur in northern Mesopotamia, many of these clay beds, along with plaques of scorpions have been found, dating to the late 2nd millennium BCE. We also have a similar depiction on cylinder seals dating to the Early Dynastic period in Sumer; c. 2800 BCE. On them we find the familiar embracing couple on a bed. Beneath the bed can be seen a scorpion, a sacred symbol of Inanna that represents the power to give life and bring death, two attributes of the goddess herself and which also hints at the fate of her consort, the dying-god.³



Figure 2:

Lesser goddess
bring priest to
Inanna, Steatite
cylinder seal, Neo-
Sumerian, c. 2112-
2004 BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after
Wolkstein &
Kramer 1983:102.

During the Neo-Sumerian period, there have been numerous cylinder seals of a lesser deity leading a worshipper by the hand to meet a higher deity, many of which involve an enthroned Inanna, as in the Steatite cylinder seal. These types of seals were meant to be like permanent prayers petitioning the deity. This motif marked a new relationship between humans and deities, one in which a mortal could have a personal relation with the divine. This changed the concept of the values of the human being, and there was recognition of the special status humans held on earth and in relation to the gods and goddesses. On this particular seal, Inanna has her feet on a lion. In front of her is the Anzu bird, flying above her sacred stylized date palm tree within a vessel. She greets, with a raised blessing hand, a lesser goddess, perhaps her vizier Ninshubur, coming towards her. Ninshubur, as I identify her, leads a bald headed worshipper to Inanna. Bald headed male figures are typically priestly or royal figures, attesting to the ritual character of the scene. From the inscription on the seal (not shown in the reproduced drawing), we know that this specific priest is almost certainly Lu-igallim of the *lumah*-priest class.⁴

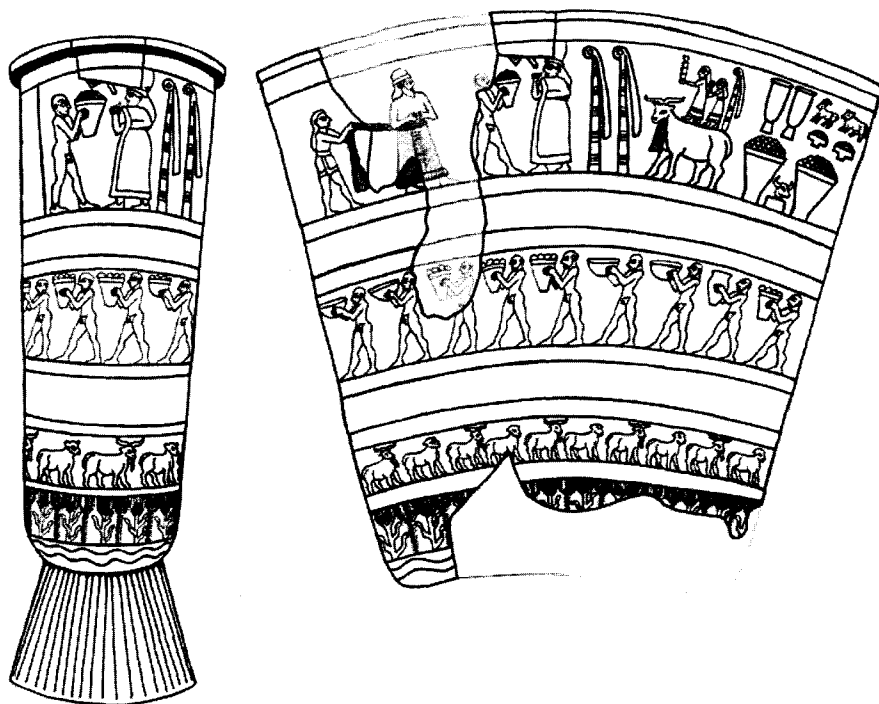


Figure 3:

‘Warka Vase’,
alabaster, 3’,
Uruk,
Mesopotamia,
c.3000 BCE.
© S. Beaulieu,
right image
after Gadon
1989:137,
figure 87a; left
reconstruction
after Meador
2000:59,
figure 16.

Commonly identified as originating from the city of Warka, just another name for Inanna’s sacred city, Uruk, known as the biblical Erech. This pre-Sargonic vase was found in the precincts of the Eanna Temple. It depicts, in relief on the top register, a high-priestess incarnating Inanna, standing before the goddess’ sacred ring-top doorpost, made out of reed bundles; perhaps marking the entrance of the sacred *gipar*. She receives the offerings for the storehouse sanctuary behind her, which has two officiating priestesses along with an altar and sacred furniture. A long procession of nude bald priests, which is typical of Sumerian ritual depictions, carrying wedding offerings of the harvested fruits of the land and libation jars, are shown on the second register, probably following the man in royal robes of the top register, who is usually referred to as the bridegroom or the king. In front of the king is another bald priest described as the gift-bearer, and behind the king is his sash-bearer who holds the king’s tasselled belt, which may have a fertility and religious significance (see Figure 20). Below the bald priests is a row of rams and ewes heavy with wool in the third register, and below them, on the fourth register, is a row of luscious barley and palms standing tall beside a river, all of which are attributes of the goddess Inanna. This ritual procession has often been interpreted as illustrating the meeting of the king and the goddess at the beginning of the sacred marriage ritual.⁵

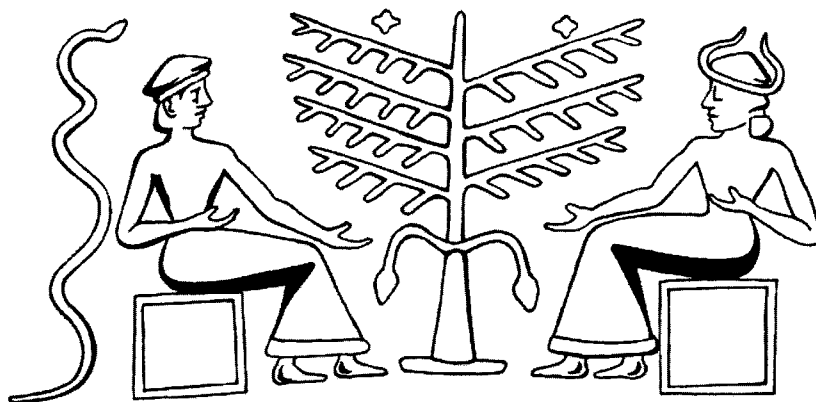


Figure 4:

‘Goddess of the Tree of Life’, cylinder seal impression, Mesopotamia, c. 2330-2150 BCE.
© S. Beaulieu, after Wolkstein & Kramer 1983:3.

Some scholars have entitled this cylinder seal, dating from the Akkadian period, as the ‘Seal of Temptation’. They saw Eve and the serpent rising on its coils next to her to the left of the tree, and sitting facing her, Adam to the right, she reaching out for the fruit of enlightenment and he reaching for the fruit of immortality, hanging on either side of the sacred date-palm tree. Most scholars now interpret this seal as depicting a god and a goddess, though some see a deity and a worshipper, either of undefined gender, or of a god and his priest, or a goddess, wearing the horn crown, with her priest or even her priestess. Since this is a cylinder seal, the snake can be rising from behind either figure, making their identification harder to pinpoint. Campbell argued that the female figure, being on the left, is almost certainly the Sumerian healing-goddess Gula-Bau, though her sacred animal is not typically a serpent, but a dog. The male figure, wearing a horned lunar crown, he argued, is “her beloved son-husband Dumuzi”⁶, the dying-god. However, we know that ‘the Lord of the Tree of Life’, Dumuzi, is Inanna’s consort, and not Bau’s. Nevertheless, Campbell may be right in interpreting the figures on this seal as Dumuzi, also known as *Amaushumgalanna*, ‘The one great source of the date clusters’, though he would most likely be depicted with his true consort, Inanna. When considering the goddess’ connection with palm trees, as ‘Lady of the Date Clusters’, and snakes (see *Inanna and the Huluppu Tree* story⁷), the seal may be one of the oldest and rarest depiction of this famous divine couple participating in the sacred marriage.⁸

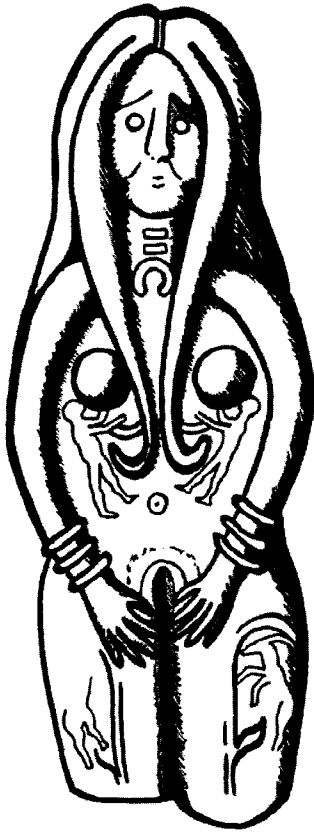


Figure 5:

‘Athirat/Asherah’, Pressed mould figure, Revadim, Israel, c. 1550-1150 BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after Keel & Uehlinger 1998:75, figure 82.

In the Levant, during the Late Bronze Age, depictions of goddesses are found on various artefacts, such as seals, precious metals, terra cottas, and even on stone stele. These dominated the Syro-Canaan iconography and appeared much more frequently than male deities. In all these mediums, the characteristics of their physical gender as females are often given special emphasis, by exaggerating the genital region or by realistically depicting the body.⁹ A perfect example is a representation of the mistress of plants known as the ‘Naked Goddess’ or ‘Branch Goddess’, because of the presence of a branch or tree with the goddess. These are probably the earliest depictions of Asherah. These features emphasize fertility and prosperity, especially of vegetation, affected by the goddess’ appearance. They personify the power of the earth to produce its fruits, which accentuates the goddess’ secret connection with fertility.¹⁰ Note the caprids flanking the palmetto tree positioned near the exposed genital, one on each thigh of the goddess.¹¹ Depictions of horned creatures appear as attendants of the goddess, like the Egyptian regeneration symbol of caprids (sheep, goats, ibexes, gazelles, deer) or bovines (cow, bull), whose horns naturally suggest the ‘horned moon’ and represent her maternal and nurturing aspect. These animals have great vitality and love, as seen in their passion for survival and liveliness.¹² Further, note the human figures (children?) nursing at her breasts, perhaps the twins Shachar and Shalim, as well as the omega (Ω), a symbol of the fertile womb, which she wears as a necklace and as her elongated hair reminiscent of the Hathor locks (see Figure 7, 8, & 9). This depiction would thus present Athirat as a *dea nutrix* and perhaps also as Rachmay. The religious system of that period included sacred trees, *massebot* (standing stones), doves, serpents, caprids, and lions, all symbols of the Palestinian goddesses, which were part of rituals of a patently sexual character.¹³



Figure 6:

Ivory box cover,
Ugarit-Minet el-Beida
1500-1200/1150 BCE.
© S. Beaulieu, after Patai
1978:plate 17.

On a damaged small ivory box cover found at Ugarit there is an image of a goddess standing on a rock, which probably symbolizes a mountain (*shadeh?*), feeding a caprid on either side with leaves she holds in both her hands. It seems that the image is arranged in a typical Syrian symmetry, but the style with which it is executed betrays a strong Late Mycenaean influence, leading some scholars to argue that it may be a Mycenaean import with Syrian iconography. The goddess wears an elaborate long skirt but is bear breasted, perhaps signifying nurture; a *dea nutrix*. She also wears a necklace and bracelets along with an elaborate coiffure with a long looping curl hanging down (an attempt at the Hathor lock?) and a horned crown, perhaps hinting at a moon symbol. This image depicts a goddess, almost certainly Athirat, as the sacred tree (see Figure 10, 11, & 12).¹⁴



Figure 7:

Gold pendant, Minet el Beida, port of Ugarit, c. 1500-1150 BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after Patai 1978:plate 13.

The Egyptian-style goddess, pictured on this 6.5 cm (2.6") gold pendant, stands on a lion that has the typical rosette on its shoulder (see Figure 9); with bent arms on either side, she grasps miniature caprids by the feet with each hand, and two snakes cross behind her lower back. She is completely nude, aside from the many layered necklace, the arm and wrist bracelets, and a chain or slim belt hanging from her waist. She also sports shoulder-length locks with two large, spiral curls at the ends that seem somewhat like the Egyptian goddess Hathor's hairstyle, which scholars have named 'Hathor locks'.¹⁵ These gold pendants were passed on by inheritance over long periods of time, though none survived through to the Iron Age.¹⁶ Basing themselves on the fact that the female figure on some Late Bronze Age pendants is depicted nude, some scholars identified this goddess as Astarte, mainly because they considered her as a fertility-goddess, if not 'the' Canaanite fertility-goddess.¹⁷ However, most scholars take a safer approach by admitting their uncertainty in regard to which goddess is actually depicted wearing the Hathor wig.¹⁸ Finally, and mostly because of the Hathor locks the goddess sports in these images, some scholars identify her as Qudshu (see Figure 8 & 9), which a number a scholars understand as an epithet of Asherah.¹⁹

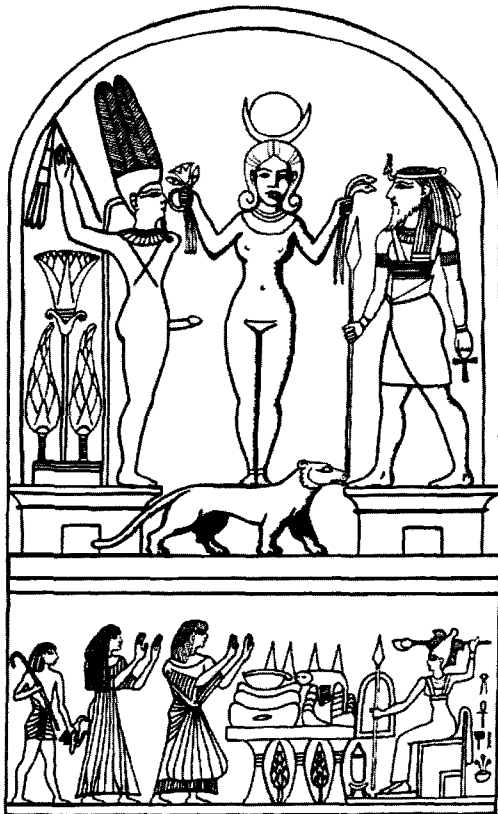


Figure 8:

The Canaanite goddess Qetesh/Qudshu standing on a lion between Min and Reshef, relief, Egypt, c. 1300 BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after Budge 1969:276.

During the 19th Egyptian Dynasty, when the Syro-Palestinian region was controlled by Egypt, an Egyptian-style 'Naked Goddess' appeared in the south Levant, where her connection with vegetation is not emphasized by branches, but rather by typically Egyptian plants – papyrus or lotus stems (an Egyptian symbol of regeneration) – which she grasps in each hand, with bent arms held on either side. There are numerous depictions of this goddess, and on occasion, she is found holding plants in one hand, while in the other she holds snakes. She sports shoulder-length locks with two large, spiral curls at the ends named 'Hathor locks'. It is not surprising that, in Egypt, she was regarded as a form of Hathor. Typically, she also wears a 'crescent-moon and full-moon crown' on her head, depicted here in this reconstruction of a damaged original, where both the crown and the face of the goddess have been broken off. She stands on the back of a lion, always represented full face, like the Egyptian god Bes, a rare depiction in Palestine at this time, and is usually flanked by the gods Reshef and Min. These images have been named '*qudshu* type', because of the inscription *qedesh*, 'holiness', written close to the goddess on a New Kingdom Period Egyptian stele. This Egyptian influenced Levantine moon-goddess is also alternatively named Qeteshet or Qudshu, as she is identified in hieroglyphs; 'Qudshu, the beloved of Ptah'. On the stele represented above without the inscription, she is named 'Ke[d]eshet, lady of the sky and mistress of all the gods'.²⁰ Based on Ugaritic texts, where the name '*atrt*' is paralleled with *qds*, as noted by Cross, Pettey, and Meier, the goddess Qudshu may be an Egyptian epithet of Asherah.²¹ The scene presented in the lower section of the stele depicts a ritual for the goddess Anat identified by name. She is here portrayed sitting with weapons at hand. The Egyptians were very well aware of the distinctions between the Levantine goddesses.²²



Figure 9:

Qudshu painted limestone relief plaque
Dated to the time of Rameses III (1198-
1166 BCE).

© S. Beaulieu, after Pritchard 1975: Vol II,
plate 61.

Many scholars have interpreted the text on this tablet to be read as the composite deity 'Qudshu-Astarte-Anat' because the name Qudshu appears to the left of the goddess' head, Astarte is written under her right elbow, and Anat under her left elbow. However, the text to the far right of the image does not seem to have ever been translated, or at least scholars never make mention of it in their analysis of this plaque. Is it undecipherable? If so, then what are the complications? Is it gibberish? Why would it be? Is it because it's a forgery? Or perhaps the text is irrelevant to the image. If it does not add any information, why is it written in this context? One can only image what it can reveal about the goddess on this plaque and if she is truly a composite deity, as so many scholars claim based on this singly anomalous occurrence of the three names. It has been suggested that, though the piece is Egyptian, the inscription may have been written by a Syrian worker in Thebes, though it is uncertain what the impact of this would be. Nonetheless, the figure depicted is undoubtedly Qudshu, complete with a plant in one hand and what appears to be a snake in her other hand. She stands on her lion that has the rosette on his shoulder (see Figure 7). She has the 'Hathor locks' and wears a bracelet and an Egyptian style necklace along with cross-bands and girdle. The cross-bands may depict the goddess' warrior side, for they usually indicate the carrying of weapons as shown on images of Inanna/Ishtar.²³



Figure 10:

Pitcher inscription, “Mattan [or gift]: a present for my lady Elat [or goddess].” Lachish, Israel, c. 1550-1150 BCE.
© S. Beaulieu, after Keel & Uehlinger 1998:73, figure 81.

In the Late Bronze Age, the stylized tree is interchangeable with the goddess and, in this role, she combines within herself the procreative and nurturing secret powers of the fertile mother earth (*dea nutrix*) who brings blessings, gives birth, nourishes, and causes humans and animals to flourish.²⁴ Inscriptions have been found, such as the one on a pitcher from the Fosse temple in Lachis, which reads: *mtn.s[h]y [l] [rb]ty 'lt*, which translates as: ‘Mattan [a present]: an offering for my lady Elat [or goddess]’. The first word may be understood either as a personal name (Mattan) or as poetic echo emphasizing the ‘gift’ offered to the mistress Elat. This pitcher seems to have been given as an offering or tribute to the temple of the goddess. The word *'lt* (Elat/goddess) seems purposely written directly over the sacred tree flanked by caprids, as seen in the reproduced detail of the pitcher above, and may possibly identify the presence of the venerated goddess Asherah in southern Palestine; Ugarit mythological texts use the forms *rbt* ‘lady’ and *'lt* ‘goddess’ as epithets of Athirat/Asherah.²⁵

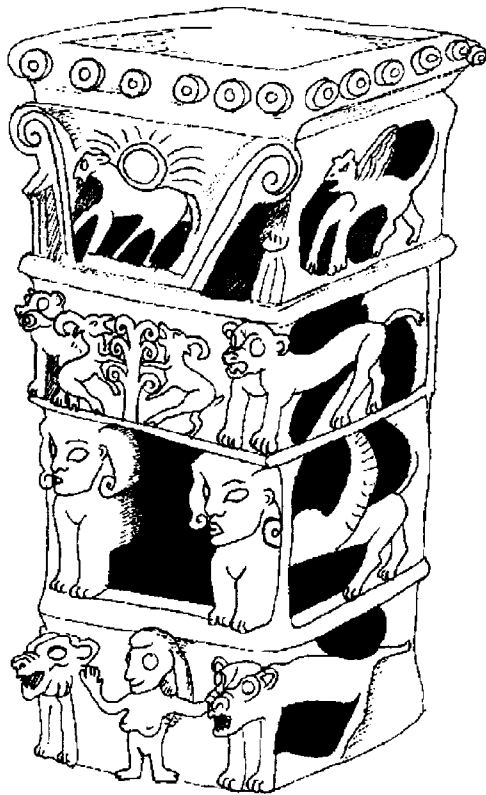


Figure 11:

Clay cult stand, terracotta, 21", Taanach, Israel, c. 900 BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after Gadon 1989:174, figure 97.

A few large terra-cotta shrine or temple model cultic stands, with relatively complex depictions of traditional Syro-Phoenician substitute symbols, were found intact in official excavations at places like Taanach, Pella, and Lachish, though most were unfortunately purchased from grave robbers. They are clearly connected with Late Bronze and early Iron Age traditions, apparently showing the continued local worship of the goddess (Asherah) in Israel during the 10th century, which used the guarding pairs of lions and *kerubim*. They may have been related to house cults devoted to the goddess, although the Lachish stand was found with a limestone altar in a small cultic room, associated with an open-air public shrine that was furnished with several *massebot*.²⁶ These tower-like objects may have been incense stands or served as supports for bowls into which small gifts were laid or libations could be poured.²⁷ The cultic stand, illustrated here, was found at Taanach in northern Israel. It is about 21 inches in height. It is an elaborately decorated artefact with four levels or registers with high relief on its front and sides, but the back is smooth and undecorated. A smiling nude 'Mistress of the Lions' stands in the centre of the bottom register, controlling by the ears with each hand a flanking lion on either side. This figure has been suggested to be Asherah, known all over the Levant as 'the Lion Lady'. The 2nd register contains an intentionally empty space flanked by a pair of winged lions or sphinxes wearing Hathor locks, perhaps examples of the biblical *kerubim* located in the Solomonic Temple. The blank space may depict an 'invisible deity' (Yahweh?), as Taylor suggested, or it may be the guarded entrance to the shrine, as suggested by Hestrin. On the 3rd level, a lion on each side flank two caprids, facing and nibbling at a stylized sacred tree, a scene certainly indicative of the goddess. The top register has *kerubim* on each side and a small offering stand with a

bowl from which a fire burns in front of each *kerub*. A quadruped, either a bull calf or a young horse (perhaps associated with Astarte), strides in the center between two standards, strikingly similar to those associated with Inanna/Ishtar (see Figure 3), marking the entrance of a sacred space. A rayed or winged solar disc appears on or above the back of the four-legged animal.²⁸ The interpretation of the symbols on the Taanach cult stand is still much disputed. A variety of explanations are given, ranging from its totally belonging to the Canaanite worship of a goddess, of goddesses, or of a god and a goddess, or it may even be an Israelite cult object dedicated to Yahweh and Asherah.²⁹ Those of the 'Yahweh and Asherah' interpretation see Asherah depicted on level one, as the 'Mistress of the Lions', and on level three, through her sacred tree symbol. The empty space between the *kerubim* on level two would reflect Yahweh as the invisible deity, while on level four, either his bull symbolizes him, or the sun disk standing on his attribute animal, the bull-calf. However, all symbols and symbolic objects often can reference a number of meanings. Thus, while the Taanach cult stand could be both Canaanite and Yahwistic simultaneously, there is no doubt that a goddess is central to the stand's symbolism.³⁰ One piece of evidence that may support the interpretation of the 'lion goddess' depicted here as being Asherah, aside from what has already been mentioned, comes from a 15th century BCE letter from Taanach that mentions the goddess Ashratum.³¹

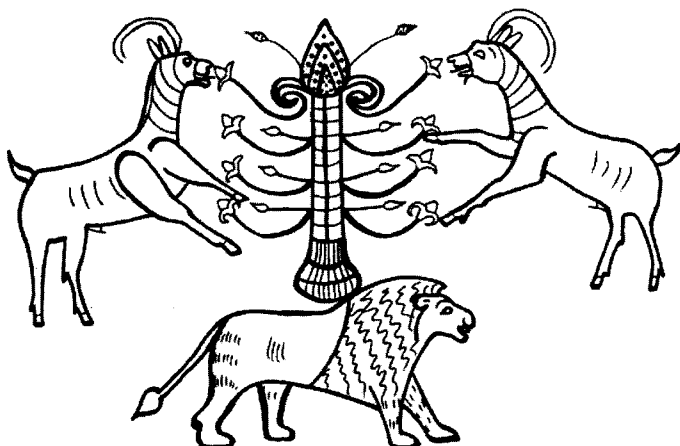


Figure 12:

Pithos A drawing, Kuntillet 'Ajrud, Israel, c. 775 BCE.
© S. Beaulieu, after Keel & Uehlinger 1998:221, figure 219.

On a storejar found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud in the northern kingdom of Israel, there is an image of the familiar 'tree of life' flanked by ibexes and supported on a lion's back. (See Figures 7, 8, & 9 for the goddess standing in the same position as the tree upon a lion) The most popular and frequently used goddess replacement image – the caprid-flanked tree – persisted from the Middle and Late Bronze Age to the Iron Age. These locally produced icons transparently represented the goddess Asherah, or her cult-object the *asherah* known from biblical texts, which was venerated in Israel and Judah. The tree is variously depicted stylized, branch-like, little, or with a long trunk and a fully formed crown, and is frequently found with a caprid. This does not only emphasize fertility, but also accentuates nourishment and prosperity.³² It is obvious that whether the symbols (tree, caprids) are by themselves or in company of the goddess, they represent her numinous power to bring blessing. Thus, what is being worshiped is not the 'objects' but the goddess they represent.³³

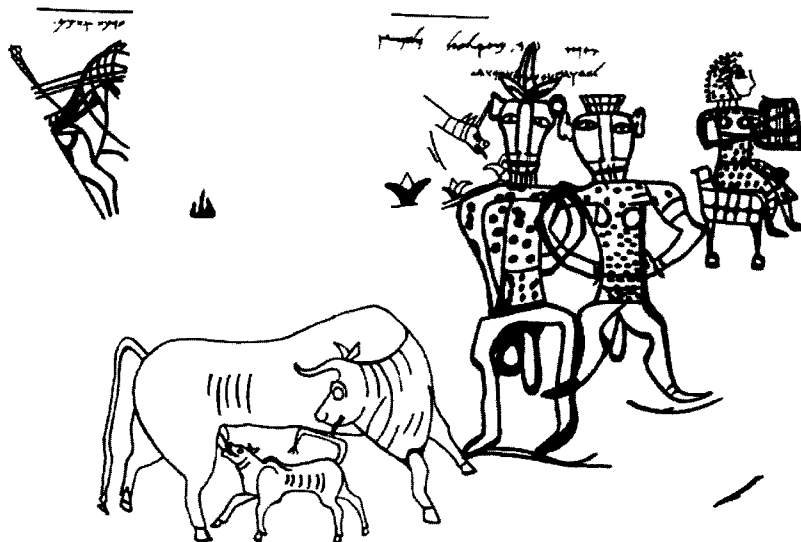


Figure 13:

Pithos A drawing,
Kuntillet 'Ajrud,
Israel c. 775 BCE.
© S. Beaulieu, after
Keel & Uehlinger
1998:213, figure 220.

On the other side of the storejar found at Kuntillet 'Ajrud in the northern kingdom of Israel, there is the depiction of a cow suckling a calf, which symbolically represents the 'Mistress of the (Mother) Animals'. Both the 'Mistress of the Lions' and the 'Mistress of the Animals' motifs, which are almost undoubtedly depictions of the goddess Asherah, were known throughout the Near East, and began infiltrating the Syro-Palestine glyptic art during the Iron Age IIA (c. 1000-925). They appeared in the northern parts of Israel first, on their way south. These motifs merged to create a complex iconography, where the goddess at times appears flanked by a lion and a bird, is found standing between the mother animals, or is the suckling mother animal herself behind which she has retreated or by which she has been replaced. Though devoid of sexual characteristics, these regeneration symbols represent her persistent fertility aspect.³⁴ Aside from the 'suckling mother animal' motif, there are two representations of the Egyptian good-luck god Bes. In the background there is a half-nude female figure playing a lyre, distinctively seated on a lion-throne, suggesting that she is a goddess. A Hebrew blessing-formula is inscribed on this storejar, which ends with "May X be blessed by Yahweh of Samaria and by his/its Asherah".³⁵ The antecedent is understood as Yahweh, thus rendering the phrase either as "Yahweh and his *asherah* [cult object]" or "Asherah [goddess]".³⁶ However, based on stylistic differences, it should be noted that more than one person painted on this jar, and the words and images are not necessarily connected to each other.³⁷

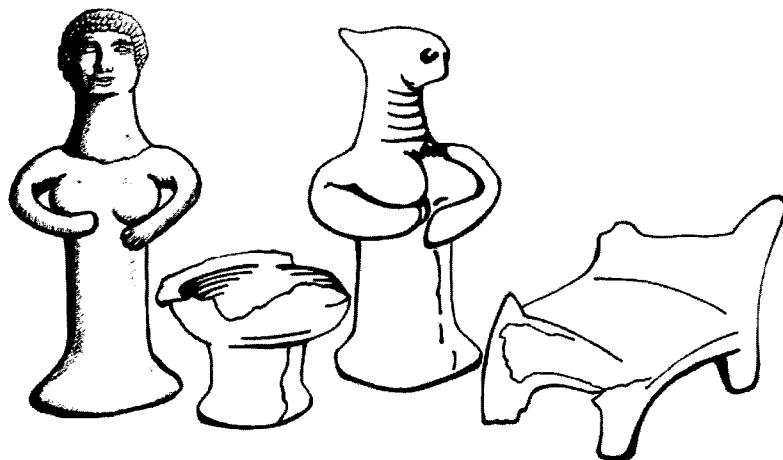


Figure 14:

Pillar Figurines, clay, Israel, c.800-700BCE. © S. Beaulieu, far left figure after Patai 1978, Plate 1; figure with furniture after Keel & Uehlinger 1998:334, figure 329.

The terra-cotta pillar figurine phenomenon began scattered production during Iron Age IIA-B in Israel and Judah as early as the late 10th century BCE. However, they greatly increased in numbers in the 8th through the entire 7th century BCE and were found primarily in Judah, though less frequently in Phoenicia, northern Israel, Philistia, and the Transjordan areas. They seem to have diminished in production and popularity in the early 6th century BCE. During this period, they alternated between familial or ‘private’ piety and the official state religion.³⁸ In almost every Iron Age II excavation these figurines have been found; for example, half of the Tell Beit-Mirsim and Beer-sheba houses contained a statuette. Though a few were found scattered in various contexts, from private to public areas, a minority were located in tombs. Surprisingly, archaeologists found a large amount of pillar figurines in ancient Judahite private homes. No more than one figurine per house was found belonging to the household effects, comparable to the biblical *teraphim* ‘icons’ (*kele bayit*; see Gen 31:37). Some were unearthed along with small model beds, seats, washing basin?³⁹, lamps, and rattles. These groupings permit various interpretations, suggesting also that they may have served a house cult function.⁴⁰ The different versions of the pillar figurines appear most frequently as having, from the waist down, a hand-formed and solid or, rarely, turned on a wheel and hollow pedestal and upper torso, cylindrical in shape, somewhat like a flared skirt or coat. The legs and pubic triangle are ignored, suggesting no erotic attachment, though they are not without erotic character. The overall shape and depiction of this pillar figurine has been compared to the stylized representation of the goddess Tannit. Naked from the waist up, this motherly goddess has an accentuated face (accessibility) and her only sexual feature, full, heavy breasts (*nutrix* and blessing; compare Gen 49:25 with Hos 9:14) modeled to signify maternal rather than sexual activities. The breasts often hang down and are supported or cupped by her thick arms, perhaps representing the evolution of Asherah from a fertility goddess to a mother *dea nutrix* (see Figure 5, 6, & 11). In Ugaritic texts she was certainly considered a wet-nurse. In contrast, most of these pillar figurines have a rough unfinished back, indicating that they were to be viewed from the front. On top of this pillar-like body usually was inserted a moulded head, which was attached to the body by a pin. Even though various sophisticated mould made head types can be differentiated, they retain significant common characteristics; they usually have large almond-shaped eyes and a tightly twisted ‘tear drop’ curl

hairstyle. These moulded head types are typically, though not exclusively, found outside Judah, in Israel and Philistia. A few moulds have been found so far and one of the manufacturing locations would seem to have been Megiddo, where four moulds have been found so far. Another manufacturing location was Lachish within the land of Judah. The hollow-bodied figurines, on the other hand, appear to be typically Philistine. At least a third of the headpieces were made completely by hand, as part of the solid body, by a crude pinch marking the nose and eyes, giving them a birdhead-like appearance. These 'pinched-nose' figurines are typically found in Judah. Traces of paint, either marking the eyes or hair to show some decoration, have also been found on some examples. A great amount of these 'pinched-nose' statuettes have been found in Jerusalem. People perhaps made for themselves these 'pinched-nose' figurines because they were unable to afford one with a moulded head sold near the Temple. Or perhaps it was more important to possess an icon of the goddess than having a specific design.⁴¹

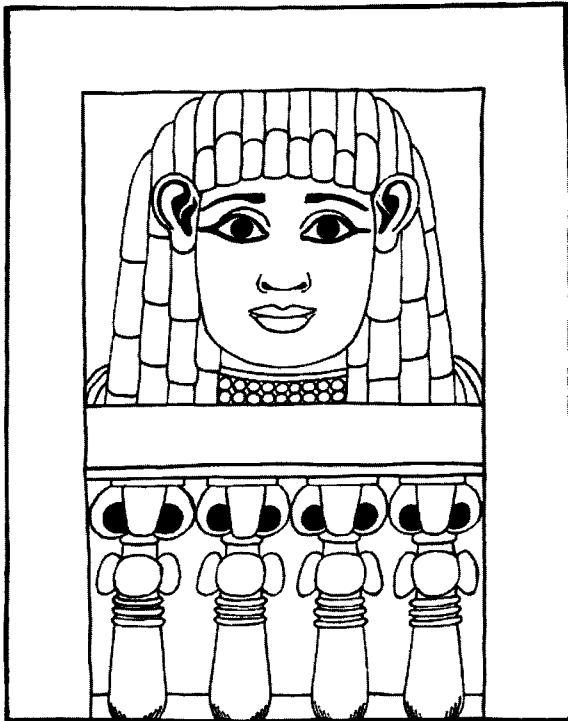


Figure 15:

Woman at the Window, inlaid ivory furniture appliqué, Syria, c. 900 BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after Shepsut, 1993:115 figure 37.

This very popular motif, which may be Phoenician in origin, has been found throughout the ancient Near East, from Canaan to Mesopotamia, including, appropriately enough, the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel, Samaria. This motif is often interpreted as representing the Israelite queen Jezebel because of her famous scene at the window (2Kgs 9:30-37). It has also been interpreted as being an image of the 'sacred prostitute' luring men from her window, though this argument is beginning to fall out of favour. Scholars are now arguing that this piece depicts a minor Babylonian goddess named Kilili, whom the Sumerian called Aba-shushu, meaning '[One/She] who leans in [or looks out of] the window'. She is commonly understood as being an associate or an aspect of the goddess Inanna/Ishtar. In the Canaan region some scholars argued that the goddess may have been Astarte, again based on the 'sacred prostitutes' and the luring of men, although at times some scholars perceived this depiction as being a scene from the sacred marriage rite. The goddess, or woman assuming the role of the goddess, is shown looking from her window or balustrade balcony decorated with usually four pillars that appear to represent stylized lily or lotus plants or even palm trees. She is represented *en face*, which is a stylistic rarity reserved for a very few select deities, with an elaborate coiffure of heavy curls, sometimes topped with a jewelled ornament, and a necklace. She looks outwards with large heavily made up eyes. Her ears protrude on either side of her head, similar to those of Qudshu and Athirat (see Figures 7, 8, & 9). Though there is no certainty as to which goddess is intended to be represented in the Syro-Palestine region, there are stylistic similarities – depicted *en face*, protruding ears, plant/tree – with the representations of Asherah. Finally, it should be noted that Jezebel, who is connected with Asherah (1Kgs 18-19), is not the only biblical woman described as looking from her window; Michal, David's wife, also assumed a similar role in the context of the Asif festival and perhaps the sacred marriage rite (2Sam 6:16).⁴²

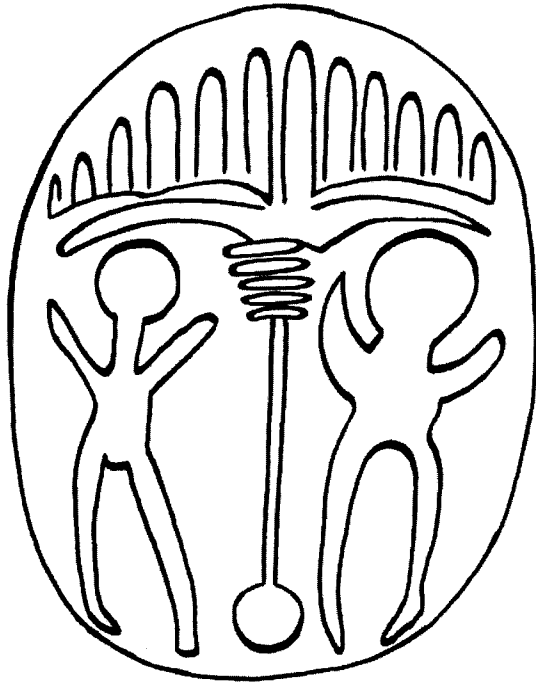


Figure 16:

Two human figures flanking a tree, scarab, Jerusalem, c. 1130-950 BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after Keel & Uehlinger 1998:151 figure 179a.

The depiction of two human figures flanking a tree is a typical motif of the Iron Age IIA on Levantine scarabs, which continued on to the early Iron Age IIB. They are locally made of limestone or bone and attest to the veneration of trees by the Israelites at this time. They seem to continue a motif found on scarabs and cylinder seals that started in Middle Bronze Age IIB Canaan (c. 1750-1550 BCE). The centralized tree in these images represents the life-giving goddess, almost certainly Asherah, and it is understood to depict a palm tree, though the stylization varies between scarabs. At the base of the tree, there seem to be an indication of a vessel, suggesting that the tree was not in the forest or garden, but in a sacred space where rituals were performed alongside the goddess' sacred tree. This vessel may also be a continuation of the Northern Mesopotamian depiction of a sacred tree planted in a pot flowing with water⁴³, which represented the earth's ability to cause vegetation to grow. Generally, with few exceptions, the human figures on these scarabs seem to be depicted naked. At times they raise their arms in worship. There are a few examples where the figures are actually reaching up and touching the tree. These scarabs were found mostly in the heartland of Israel and Judah: in Jerusalem (depicted here), Beth-El, Beth-Shemesh, Tell Halif, Tell el-Far'a, el-Gib, Lachish, Megiddo, Samaria, Tell en-Nasbeh, and so forth. It has been proposed that these scarabs are perhaps related to cults that centred on the holy tree found in pre-monarchic Israel: Kadesh (Jdg 4:11), Shechem (Gen 12:6, 35:4; Dt 11:30), Ofrah (Jdg 6:11, 19, 25f., 28, 30), Mamre (Gen 18:1, 4, 8, 23:17f.), and Beersheba (Gen 21:33).⁴⁴

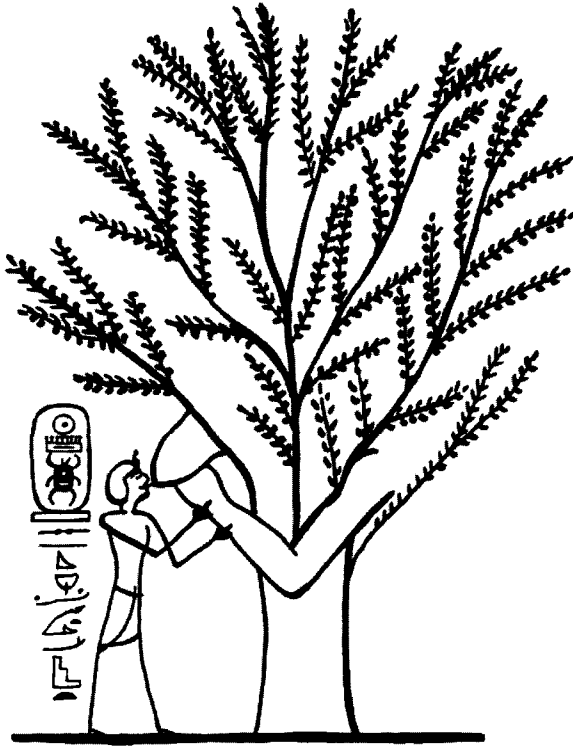


Figure 17:

Tuthmosis III suckled by Isis in the guise of a sycamore tree, wall painting, tomb of Tuthmosis III, Thebes, Egypt, c. 1500 BCE.
© S. Beaulieu, after Cook 1974:42, plate 11.

When considering how the mortuary goddess cared for the dead, the Egyptians drew upon their own experiences as weary travelers who stop in an oases and obtained refreshment from the fruit of the sycamore tree, and water from the spring that bathes its roots, for their concept of the afterlife. Naturally, they attributed such gifts to a kindly tree spirit. The deceased was therefore perceived as satiated by a goddess of the dead in the form of a tree divinity when in the hereafter.⁴⁵ Though the Pyramid Text, which mentions the dead man on his last journey to the sycamore in the eastern horizon, does not yet connect this tree with any particular deity, it does identify Nut, the sky-goddess, as a goddess of the dead.⁴⁶ Further investigation of the Egyptian historical period reveals that the sacred tree cult began with purely local cults. However, by the 18th Dynasty through to the 21st Dynasty (c. 1530-945 BCE), the tree cult quickly became connected with non-local deities, such as Nut, Hathor, and Isis, all old sky-goddesses. Only these tree-goddesses played a decisive role in the tree cult and mortuary offerings, though Isis is not mentioned as a tree-goddess in the Book of the Dead.⁴⁷ On the above illustration, the inscription reads: “Men-cheper-re [Thutmosis III’s throne name] suckling at his mother Isis.” It should be mentioned that Thutmosis’s actual mother was also named Isis, yet it is unlikely that a mortal woman would have been depicted as a tree.⁴⁸

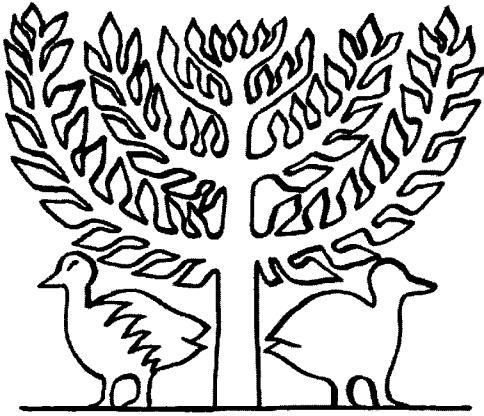


Figure 18:

Design from a stone vase, Mesopotamia, c. 3000 BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after Cook 1974:119, plate 67.

This depiction of the sacred tree with seven branches shows the strong symbolic tradition that spread throughout the ancient Near East and found its way to Israel. Taylor made the argument that the *asherah* pole was not only a stylized tree but a living almond tree that was pruned and given a familiar shape with seven branches. He further argued that, since the tradition of making the goddess Asherah's sacred tree and placing it in the Temple of Jerusalem was hard to eradicate, later priests absorbed the cultic symbol into monotheistic Yahwism by making the tree out of gold, rather than using a living tree, turning it into a candelabra, and calling it a Menorah.⁴⁹

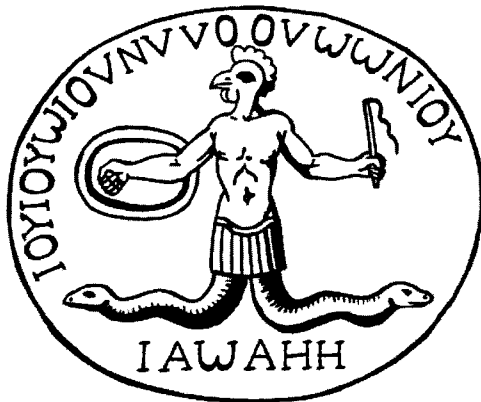


Figure 19:

'The Anguipede' amulet, Judea, c. 2nd-1st century BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after Campbell 1974:294.

Judean amulets dating to the Greco-Roman and Maccabean periods (2nd century BCE) were found with Jewish symbols and figures depicted on them. One of these figures is known amongst scholars as the 'Anguipede' type. This typically cock-headed snake-legged figure is usually labelled *Iaw*, the common Hellenistic name for the Israelite god Yahweh. On other amulets, the god sports a lion's head, which is another animal variation of a solar symbol. Bearing the shield of Ares on his right arm and the whip of Helios in his left hand, the god is normally represented in his war-god aspect. On a few images, appropriately enough, the god is shown with a phallus, perhaps relating to the initiatory rite of circumcision associated with the Jewish religion, though it also conveys, in an obvious way, a connection with fertility.⁵⁰



Figure 20:

'Goddess of Gagarino', Russia, c. 20 000 BCE.

© S. Beaulieu, after Wayland Barber 1995:56, figure 2.5 a.

During the Palaeolithic and Neolithic eras (c. 20 000-3000 BCE), settling people began to increasingly fashion goddesses throughout Europe and the Near East. These small, plump figurines made of bone, clay, stone, and ivory are commonly nicknamed 'Venus' figures by 19th century scholars probably for their apparent reference to fertility and abundance made obvious by their nakedness and their heavy emphasis on the breasts, belly, and pubic area. Many of these 'goddess' figures are depicted as wearing skirts or aprons of strings (as is the case of the figure here depicted) and seem to have originated with the culture commonly called the Gravettian, which occupied sites in central and eastern Europe. This string-skirt tradition continued for thousands of years and geographically expanded by influencing neighbouring cultures. Up until a few decades ago, many Eastern European countries still made and used string-skirts. Though their basic design has been slightly altered, some countries still use them, such as Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Albania, where they retained their original purpose. In Greece, the string-skirt is still kept in case of a childbearing emergency. These string-skirts seem to have emphasized the female sexual areas by framing them, rather than hiding them. This is the case with the 'Goddess of Gagarino', where, as Homer mentions in the *Iliad* (Book 14), the string-skirt is to be worn under the fold of the breast.⁵¹

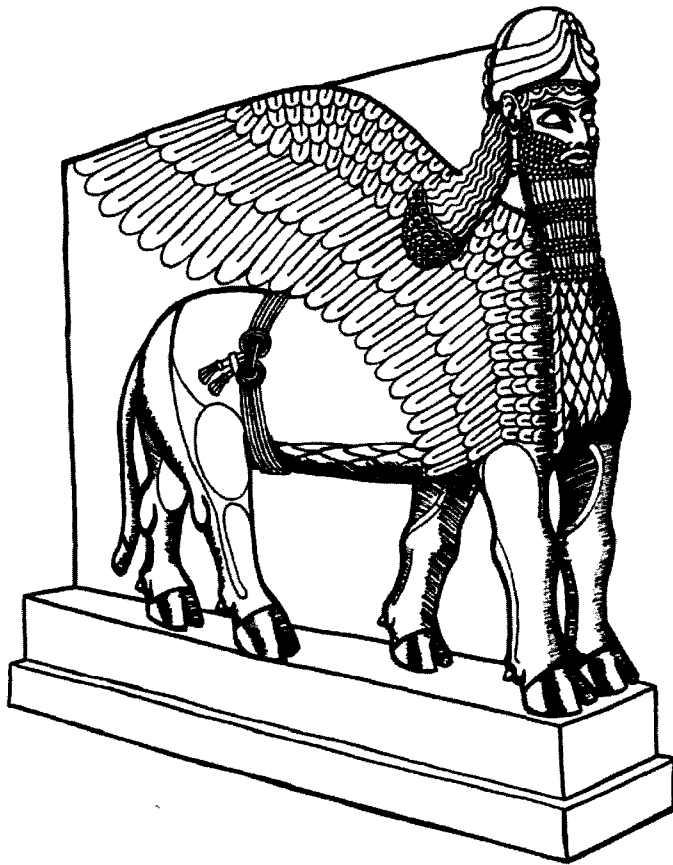


Figure 21:

‘Winged Bull of Heaven’,
Assyria, c. 9-8th century BCE.
© S. Beaulieu, after Pritchard
1958: Vol I, plate 163.

This monumental depiction of a fantastic winged lion-bull with a human head was especially common in Assyria, though its influence reached throughout Mesopotamia and the Levant, both in relief and on cylinder seals. It is thought that the inspiration behind these mythical beasts was the memory of a species of bison that gradually became extinct in the area, from the south up. The thick hair covering the chest and under-part of the animal seem to indicate such a connection. The additional leg, in the middle, is not a defect; rather it is part of the artistic style of the time and is meant to make visible, from the side, the genii’s four legs. These statues were part of the architectural design of temples and palaces; they flanked the great entranceway and were inserted as relief carvings into the walls. There is no doubt as to the religious significance of these genii; standing on either side of the gateway, they were the guardians of the entrance. The Levant may have had their local variation in the *kerubim*, perhaps influenced by the Phoenicians, which may have made them look more like female sphinxes, with a touch of Egyptian impingement (see Figure 11, the Taanach cult-stand, register 2). However, on Judean amulets, dating to the 6th BCE, an Assyrian style *kerub* is depicted with a winged god (Yahweh?) standing on its back.⁵²

Appendix:

- ¹ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.211, 214-215, Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, p.82, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.128-129, 136, and Kramer & Wolkstein, *Inanna*, pp.187, 198-199.
- ² Assante, 'From Whores to Hierodules', p.29.
- ³ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.211, 214-215, Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, p.82, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.128-129, 136, and Kramer & Wolkstein, *Inanna*, pp.187, 198-199.
- ⁴ Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, p.120, Kramer & Wolkstein, *Inanna*, pp.196, 198, and Meador, *Inanna; Lady of Largest Heart*, p.76.
- ⁵ Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, pp.82-85, Gadon, *The Once and Future Goddess*, pp.136-137, Larrington, *The Woman's Companion to Mythology*, pp.16-17, Meador, *Inanna; Lady of Largest Heart*, pp.58-59, and Saggs, *Babylonians*, pp.40, 42-43, 53-54.
- ⁶ Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, p.14.
- ⁷ Kramer & Wolkstein, *Inanna*, pp.4-9.
- ⁸ Baring and Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, p.212, Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, p.295, Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, p.14, Cook, *The Tree of Life*, p.113, Kramer & Wolkstein, *Inanna*, p.178, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, pp.106-107.
- ⁹ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.47, 397, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.31.
- ¹⁰ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.28, 47, 397.
- ¹¹ Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.35 and Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.74.
- ¹² Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.50 and Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.20, 22, 47, 397.
- ¹³ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.193-194, Harding, *Woman's Mysteries*, p.51, Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.34-35, and Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.29, 47-48, 397.
- ¹⁴ Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.31.
- ¹⁵ Amiet, 'The Middle East', p.164, figure 75, Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.42, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.66, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.31.
- ¹⁶ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.54.
- ¹⁷ Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, plate 13 and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.13.
- ¹⁸ Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.13.
- ¹⁹ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.68 and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.13-14.
- ²⁰ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386-397, Baring & Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess*, pp.458-459, Betlyon, 'The Cult of Aserah/Elat at Sidon', pp.54-55, Budge, *The Gods of the Egyptians; Volume 2*, pp.276, 279-280, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.33-35, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p.47, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.66, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.92, Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.31, and Stuckey, 'The Holy One', p.5.
- ²¹ Ackerman, 'The Queen Mother and the Cult in Ancient Israel', pp.386-397, Betlyon, 'The Cult of Aserah/Elat at Sidon', pp.54-55, Binger, *Asherah: Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament*, pp.59, 144, Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, pp.33-35, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.47, 49, and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', pp.91-92.
- ²² Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.92 and Stuckey, 'The Holy One', p.5.
- ²³ Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.191-192, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.91, and Stuckey, 'The Holy One', p.3.
- ²⁴ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.56, 58, 72, 74, 96-97, 397-398.

- ²⁵ Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.33, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.72, and Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.166.
- ²⁶ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.154-155, 162, 174.
- ²⁷ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.154-155, 162.
- ²⁸ Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.178, Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.41, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.155, 157-158, Maier, 'Aserah: Extrabiblical Evidence', p.168, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.41. Taylor and Hestrin discussed in Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.157.
- ²⁹ Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.41.
- ³⁰ Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.42. From bottom to top, the four registers' sequence could be interpreted as a three-dimensional portrayal of graded sacredness, which intensifies and progresses from chaos to ordered cosmos. (1) The 'Mistress of the Lions' represents the outlying desert regions; (2) the *kerubim* mark the entrance to the holy place in which (3) the *asherah* tree bestows blessings. Finally, (4) the shrine itself is portrayed, where the earthly temple and the heavenly sphere coming into contact, as expresses by the winged solar disk. Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.41 and Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p.158.
- ³¹ Van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p.100.
- ³² Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.42 and Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.141, 149-150, 152-153, 173-174, 399-400.
- ³³ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.141, 152, 173-174, 399-400.
- ³⁴ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.141, 143, 147, 149-150, 152, 173-175, 399-400.
- ³⁵ Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When Did They Know It?*, p.184.
- ³⁶ Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', pp.38-39.
- ³⁷ Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.33.
- ³⁸ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.325, 327-329, 331, 335-336, 369, 403, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p199, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.37.
- ³⁹ From the discussion on the sacred marriage, we have seen that the priestess' washing purification and the bed are crucial elements to the ritual. These objects may be represented here in connection with the goddess Asherah pillar figurine.
- ⁴⁰ Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.325, 327-329, 333, 369, 403, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, p199, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.37.
- ⁴¹ Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, p.160, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp. 325, 327-328, 332, 369, 403, Hadley, *The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah*, pp.198-199, 202-205, Lutzky, 'Shadday as a Goddess Epithet', pp.18, 23, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.162, and Stuckey, 'The Great Goddesses of the Levant', p.37.
- ⁴² Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, p201, Porter, 'The Interpretation of 2 Samuel VI and Psalm CXXXII', pp.165-166, Rosenstock, 'David's Play: Fertility Rituals and the Glory of God in 2 Samuel 6', p.75, Seow, *Myth, Drama, and the Politics of David's Dance*, p.137, Shepsut, *Journey of the Priestess*, pp.114-115, Stuckey, 'Goddess, Whore, or Both? Kilili, the "Woman at the Window"', pp.1-4, and Stuckey, 'Sacred Prostitute', p.1.
- ⁴³ I would like to bring special attention to a well-known painting found in the anteroom of the temple of Ishtar at Mari, dating to about 1750 BCE. It depicts two goddesses each holding a vase from which emerges a tree and from which flows four streams of water, or rivers. This traditional association of water and trees may be at the origin of the four river passage found in Genesis 2:10-14. Most scholars perceive this section as interrupting the flow of the text, yet they do not interpret it as a late addition, but an old fragment that was preserved for unclear reasons aside than offer a geographical setting. They did not seem to have considered an iconographic connection. Gunkel, *Genesis*, p.10, 26, Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.21, 124 figure 8, and Wallace, *The Eden Narrative*, p.10.

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- ⁴⁴ Keel, *Goddesses and Trees, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.21-24, 26, 30-32, 39, 41, 43, and Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.29-30, 151-153.
- ⁴⁵ Buhl, 'The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult', p.97 and Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.36-38.
- ⁴⁶ Buhl, 'The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult', pp.88, 91, 96 and Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.36-38.
- ⁴⁷ Buhl, 'The Goddesses of the Egyptian Tree Cult', pp.80, 95-96 and Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, pp.36-38.
- ⁴⁸ Keel, *Goddesses and Tree, New Moon and Yahweh*, p.37.
- ⁴⁹ Cook, *The Tree of Life*, p.119, Taylor, 'The Asherah, the Menorah and the Sacred Tree', pp.35, 48.
- ⁵⁰ Campbell, *The Mythic Image*, p.294 and Campbell, *Occidental Mythology*, pp.274-275.
- ⁵¹ Stuckey, 'Ancient Mother Goddesses and Fertility Cults', p.41 and Wayland Barber, *Women's Work*, pp.44, 55-56, 59-60, 65.
- ⁵² Contenau, *Everyday Life in Babylon and Assyria*, pp.xiii, 57-58, plates iv & v-6, Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis*, figure 13, Keel and Uehlinger, *Gods, Goddesses, and Images of God In Ancient Israel*, pp.337, 340, and Moscati, *The Face of the Ancient Orient*, pp.95, 304, plates xii & xxxii.

APPENDIX 3
The Eden Narrative (Genesis 2:4b-3:24)
Jewish Publication Society Translation

- 2:4b When the LORD God¹ made earth and heaven;
5 when no shrub of the field was yet on earth,
and no grasses of the field had yet sprouted,
because the LORD God had not sent rain upon the earth,
and there was no man to till the soil,
6 but a flow would well up from the ground,
and water the whole surface of the earth,
7 the LORD God formed man²
from the dust of the earth.³
He blew into his nostrils the breath of life,
and man became a living being.
8 The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east,
and placed there the man whom He had formed.
9 And from the ground the LORD God caused to grow
every green tree that was pleasing to the sight and good for food,
with the tree of life in the middle of the garden,
and the tree of knowledge of good and bad.
10 A river issues from Eden to water the garden,
and then divides and becomes four branches.
11 The name of the first is Pishon⁴,
the one that winds through the whole land of Havilah,
where the gold is.
12 The gold of that land was good;
bdellium is there,
and lapis lazuli.
13 The name of the second river is Gihon⁵,
the one that winds through the whole land of Cush.
14 The name of the third river is Tigris,
the one that flows east of Asshur.
And the fourth river is the Euphrates.⁶
15 The LORD God took the man
and placed him in the garden of Eden,
to till it and tend it.
16 And the LORD God commanded the man, saying:
“Of every tree of the garden
you are free to eat;
17 but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad,
you must not eat of it;
for as soon as you eat of it,

- you shall die.”
- 18 The LORD God said:
 “It is not good for man to be alone;
 I will make a fitting helper for him.”
- 19 And the LORD God formed out of the earth
 all the wild beasts
 and all the birds of the sky,
 and brought them to the man
 to see what he would call them;
 and whatever the man called each living creatures,
 that would be its name.
- 20 And the man gave names to all the cattle
 and to the birds of the sky,
 and to all the wild beasts;
 but for Adam no fitting helper was found.
- 21 So the LORD God cast a deep sleep upon the man;
 and while he slept,
 He took one of his ribs
 and close up the flesh at that spot.
- 22 And the LORD God fashioned the rib
 that he had taken from the man
 into a woman;
 and He brought her to the man.
- 23 Then the man said:
 “This one at last is bone of my bone,
 and flesh of my flesh!
 This one shall be called Woman⁷,
 from man⁸ was she taken.”
- 24 Hence a man leaves father and mother
 and clings to his wife, so that they become one flesh.
- 25 The two of them were naked,
 the man and his wife,
 yet they felt no shame.
- 3:1 Now the serpent was the shrewdest⁹
 of all the wild beasts that the LORD God had made.
 He said to the woman:
 “Did God¹⁰ really say:
 ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden’?”
- 2 The woman replied to the serpent:
 “We may eat of the fruit of the other trees of the garden.
 3 It is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said:
 ‘You shall not eat of it,
 or touch it,
 lest you die’.”

- 4 And the serpent said to the woman:
"You are not going to die,
5 but God knows that
as soon as you eat of it
your eyes will be opened
and you will be like divine beings¹¹
who know good and bad."
- 6 When the woman saw
that the tree was good for eating
and a delight for the eyes,
and that the tree was desirable as a source of wisdom,
she took of its fruit and ate.
She also gave some to her husband, and he ate.
- 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened
and they perceived that they were naked;
and they sewed together fig-leaves
and made themselves loincloths.¹²
- 8 They heard the sound of the LORD God
moving about in the garden at the breezy time of day;
and the man and his wife hid from the LORD God,
among the trees of the garden.
- 9 The LORD God called out to the man and said to him:
"Where are you?"
- 10 He replied:
"I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid
because I was naked, so I hid."
- 11 The He asked:
"Who told you that you were naked?
Did you eat of the tree from which I had forbidden you to eat?"
- 12 The man said:
"The woman You put at my side;
she gave me of the tree,
and I ate."
- 13 And the LORD God said to the woman:
"What is this you have done?"
The woman replied:
"The serpent duped me,
and I ate."
- 14 Then the LORD God said to the serpent:
"Because you made this,
More curst shall you be
Than all the cattle
And all the wild beasts:
On your belly¹³ shall crawl,

- And dirt you shall eat,
All the days of your life.
- 15 And I put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your offspring and hers;
They shall strike at your head,
And you shall strike at their heel.”
- 16 And to the woman He said:
“I will make most severe
Your pangs in childbearing;
In pain shall you bear children.
Yet your urge shall be fore your husband,¹⁴
And he shall rule over you.”
- 17 To Adam He said:
“Because you did as your wife said,
and ate of the tree which I commanded you:
‘You shall not eat of it’,
Cursed be the ground because of you;
By toil shall you eat of it,
All the days of your life.
- 18 Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you,
But your food will be the grasses of the field.¹⁵
- 19 By the sweat of your brow
shall you get bread to eat,
Until you return to the ground –
For from it you were taken.¹⁶
For dust you are,
And to dust you shall return.”¹⁷
- 20 The man named his wife Eve¹⁸:
because she was the ‘Mother to all the living’.
- 21 And the LORD God made garments of skin
for Adam and his wife,
and clothed them.
- 22 And the LORD God said:
“Now that the man has become like one of us,
knowing good and bad.
What if he should stretch out his hand
and take also from the tree of life,
and eat and live forever!”
- 23 So the LORD God banished him from the garden of Eden,
to till the soil from which he was taken.
- 24 He drove the man¹⁹ out,
and stationed east of the garden of Eden the cherubim
and the fiery²⁰ ever-turning sword,
to guard the way to the tree of life.

¹ The Hebrew text actually has the composite name Yahweh Elohim, which is unusual; especially since Genesis 2-3 is the only place where it occurs in the Bible, aside from Ex 9:30. It is generally understood that the original author used only the name Yahweh (rendered LORD in the English translations all in capital letters to imitate the Tetragramaton; the four Hebrew letters spelling the name YHWH) throughout the text, while Elohim (rendered God; see note ix) would have been a late redaction who attached the text of Genesis 1, which uses Elohim alone throughout, with this one in order to create a link between the two texts (Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, p.37).

² The Hebrew word here translated in English as 'man' is *adam*. Throughout the Eden narrative, this word is preceded with the definite article *ha*, in English 'the', which would make it clear that it is not a personal name, as it has sometimes been translated in some version of the Bible in English and other languages (cf. the King James Version). It should also be remembered that Hebrew is a gendered language, and that, in its plural form, words are often inclusive of both the male and female genders and may therefore make a neutral reference. Therefore, some scholars have claimed that the word *adam* is here referring to humanity, which includes both men and women. However, things get complicated when the word *adam* is used in opposition to the woman or Eve. In those instances all scholars seem to agree that the word *adam* specifically refer to a single male person. Some take a more general stance by saying that the *adam* before the creation of the woman is used to refer to humanity in general, but once the woman is created, the *adam* becomes a reference to the human male. In this way the text can be quite suggestive. I, like many recent biblical translators, including the version presented here, prefer to take a consistent approach to the word *adam* by understanding it as referring to an individual human male both before and after the creation of the woman, since both before and after the word is consistently used in a singular masculine way. (Dragga, Genesis 2-3: 'A Story of Liberation', p.3, Driscoll, 'Etymology and use of Adam', <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01129a.htm>, Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, p.81, and Speiser, *Genesis*, p.18)

³ There is a word play between *adam*, translated as man, and *adamah*, usually translated as earth.

⁴ The Gusher.

⁵ The Bubbler. The Gihon is also the name of the river that flowed at the east of Jerusalem.

⁶ The entire passage containing the rivers of Eden is reminiscent of the tablet of nations found in Genesis 10. The problem here is that this does not seem to be a 'J' original, but unfortunately does not seem to belong to any other source of the biblical authors. Aside from giving a geographical location for Eden, it does not serve any priestly purpose, and it breaks the flow of the 'J' narration. On the other hand, through a mythological perspective, the mention of the four rivers was quite important, referring perhaps to the four corners of the earth. It might have been an older, or a later source which had too much significance to be tossed aside. Most scholars keep it as a 'J' document. See Speiser, *Genesis*, pp.14-20.

⁷ *Ishshà*.

⁸ '*Ish*, a male person. Here the man (*adam*) is identifying himself as he is naming his matching helper. However, the *Septuagint* has: "because she was taken out of her husband." This implies that originally the Hebrew text may have had a different wordplay; instead of '*ishshà*'/*ish* it would have been '*ishshà*'/*ishshah*. See Bechtel, 'Genesis 2:4b-3:24: A Myth About Human Maturation', p.16.

⁹ The plural Hebrew word for naked in 2:25 is *arummim*, which is a play on word with the singular Hebrew word for shrewd, *arum*.

¹⁰ The actual Hebrew is *elohim*, literally meaning 'gods', and in Hebrew the masculine plural can also encompass the feminine.

¹¹ Here again, as everywhere in the serpent-woman dialog, the Hebrew word is *elohim*. See note ix. The *King James Version* uses the word 'gods', while other translations, like the *American Standard Version* and the *New International Version*, use the word 'God'. Note that the composite name 'Yahweh Elohim' is not used in their dialogue. It could be speculated that, if the 'J' narrator originally used Yahweh as the name of the god, then the use of *elohim* here is perhaps to be understood as referring to the gods in general, and not specifically to Yahweh.

¹² Sometimes translated as girdles or aprons, which are perhaps related to the 'string skirt', though they are generally worn only by women. Perhaps they also refer to the priestly *ephod*. The Hebrew word in Genesis, *chagor*, is not the same as in Samuel, *ephod*. However, to ceremonially put on a *chagor* has a militaristic aspect to it, associated with a sword, and it is a variant article of *ephod* (1Sam 2:18). Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, p.95.

¹³ There seem to be a play on words here between belly (*g^hon*) and the Gi^hon River, perhaps making a connection between the serpent and the river.

¹⁴ Compare Songs 7:10 [Heb 7:11]; "My lover is mine, and he desires me."

¹⁵ See parallel in verse 2:5.

¹⁶ See parallel in 3:23.

¹⁷ See parallel in 2:7.

¹⁸ ^hHawah, which may also mean 'life giver', 'bow down', 'reverence', and 'obedience'. It is also an epithet of the goddess Asherah; thus perhaps referring to a priestess, similar to Uchat in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Jastrow, 'Adam and Eve in Babylonian Literature', p.211), who was dedicated to Yahweh; notice the commonality between the names YHWH and ^hHVH. Notice also that the *adam* has just been revealed that he will work the Adamah (ground) for food, and he turns to the woman and calls her the Mother of all Life. Perhaps an association between Adamah and ^hHawah as both producer of life and food is to be understood.

¹⁹ Notice how only the *adam* is driven out of the Garden of Eden, and not the woman ^hHawah, just as he is the only one who should be prevented from eating the fruit of the Tree of Life in 3:22. One could go further and say that it was not until he ate of the forbidden fruit that Yahweh came into the garden, and it was him that Yahweh looked for, not the woman.

²⁰ It has been suggested that the word *lahat* may be the personal name of a fire god. Hendel made this suggestion, and insinuated that it might be another name for the god Reshep. Hendel, 'The Flame of the Whirling Sword', pp.671-674.