

*The Cult Of Asherah In Ancient Israel And Judah Evidence  
For A Hebrew Goddess University Of Cambridge Oriental  
Publications*

**There is still much disagreement over the origins and development of Israelite religion. Mark Smith sets himself the task of reconstructing the cult of Yahweh, the most important deity in Israel's early religion, and tracing the transformation of that deity into the sole god - the development of monotheism.**

**Reveals the tradition of goddess worship in early Judaism and how Jesus attempted to restore the feminine side of the faith • Provides historical and archaeological evidence for an earlier form of Hebrew worship with both male and female gods, including a 20th-century discovery of a Hebrew temple dedicated to both Yahweh and the warrior goddess Anat • Explores the Hebrew pantheon of goddesses, including Yahweh's wife, Asherah, goddess of fertility and childbirth • Shows how both Jesus and his great rival Simon Magus were attempting to restore the ancient, goddess-worshipping religion of the Israelites Despite what Jews and Christians--and indeed most people--believe, the ancient Israelites venerated several deities besides the Old Testament god Yahweh, including the goddess Asherah, Yahweh's wife, who was worshipped openly in the Jerusalem Temple. After the reforms of King Josiah and Prophet Jeremiah, the religion recognized Yahweh alone, and history was rewritten to make it appear that it had always been that way. The worship of Asherah and other goddesses was now heresy, and so the status of women was downgraded and they were blamed for God's wrath. However, as Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince reveal, the spiritual legacy of the Jewish goddesses and the Sacred Feminine lives on. Drawing on historical research, they examine how goddess worship thrived in early Judaism and included a pantheon of goddesses. They share new evidence for an earlier form of Hebrew worship that prayed to both male and female gods, including a 20th-century archaeological discovery of a Hebrew temple dedicated to both Yahweh and the goddess Anat. Uncovering the Sacred Feminine in early Christianity, the authors show how, in the first century AD, both Jesus and his great rival, Simon Magus, were attempting to restore the goddess-worshipping religion of the Israelites. The authors reveal how both men accorded great honor to the women they adored and who traveled with them as priestesses, Jesus's Mary Magdalene and Simon's Helen. But, as had happened centuries before, the Church rewrote history to erase the feminine side of the faith, deliberately ignoring Jesus's real message and again condemning women to marginalization and worse. Providing all the necessary evidence to restore the goddess to both Judaism and Christianity, Picknett and Prince expose the disastrous consequences of the suppression of the feminine from these two great religions and reveal how we have been collectively and instinctively craving the return of the Sacred Feminine for millennia.**

**Ellen White explores the depiction of the divine council under the authority of Yahweh in the type-scenes of the Hebrew Bible. She proposes criteria for determining a Council of Yahweh type-scene and membership requirements. Following these criteria the Council of Yahweh texts are Isaiah 6, 1 Kings 22, Job 1-2, Zechariah 3, and Daniel 7. After determining a cast of characters, the author explores the structure of the council and realizes that the structure contains three tiers with two divisions on tiers 2 and 3. The first tier belongs to the chief god, the second tier is called the Councilors and the two divisions are Judicial Officials and Advisors. The third tier is the Agents and the two divisions on this tier are the Court Officers and Commissioned. Characters who play a role relating to the council, but are not themselves members of the council are also analyzed. Finally, Ellen White evaluates the potential for conceptual evolution, especially in relationship to monotheism and the participation of human beings within the Council of Yahweh.**

**This is the first thorough account of the nature and the spread of the cult of Cybele, the Great Mother, and the first to present her worship soberly as a religion rather than sensationally as an orgiastic celebration of self-castrated priest-attendants.**

**Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts**

**In Search of God the Mother**

**"Of Wood and Stone"**

**The Judean Pillar-figurines and the Archaeology of Asherah**

**Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel**

**The Cult of Anatolian Cybele**

**The Religion of Ancient Israel**

The cultures of the great empires of the ancient Near East from Egypt to Mesopotamia influenced Israel's religion, literature, and laws because of Israel's geographic location and political position situation. Anyone who wishes to understand the Old Testament texts and the history of ancient Israel must become familiar with the history, literature, and society of the surrounding kingdoms that at times controlled the region. Brief in presentation yet broad in scope, Ancient Near East will introduce students to the information and ideas essential to understanding the texts of the Old Testament while clarifying difficult issues concerning the relationship between Israel and its neighbors. Abingdon Essential Guides fulfill the need for brief, substantive, yet highly accessible introductions to the core disciplines in biblical, theological, and religious studies.

In this history of the development of monotheism, the author explains how Israel's religion evolved from a cult of Yahweh as a primary deity among many to a fully defined monotheism

with Yahweh as sole god. Repudiating the traditional scholarly premise that Israel was fundamentally different in culture and religion from its Canaanite neighbors, he shows that the two cultures were fundamentally similar.

"Were there countervailing cosmic realms ruled by Yahweh and Asherah in late pre-exilic Israel? Brian B. Schmidt presents five case studies corroborating the existence of a daimonic realm replete with intermediary protective spirits and a pandemonium that wreaked havoc upon both the living and dead. Having converged with Egypt's protective deities Bes and Beset, YHWH and Asherah also possessed the enhanced powers to govern a counteractive apotropaic realm from which Asherah mediated divine protections for humanity." -- bck cover

"This splendid reference describes every woman in Jewish and Christian scripture . . . monumental" (Library Journal). In recent decades, many biblical scholars have studied the holy text with a new focus on gender. *Women in Scripture* is a groundbreaking work that provides Jews, Christians, or anyone fascinated by a body of literature that has exerted a singular influence on Western civilization a thorough look at every woman and group of women mentioned in the Bible, whether named or unnamed, well known or heretofore not known at all. They are remarkably varied—from prophets to prostitutes, military heroines to musicians, deacons to dancers, widows to wet nurses, rulers to slaves. There are familiar faces, such as Eve, Judith, and Mary, seen anew with the full benefit of the most up-to-date results of biblical scholarship. But the most innovative aspect of this book is the section devoted to the many females who in the scriptures do not even have names. Combining rigorous research with engaging prose, these articles on women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament will inform, delight, and challenge readers interested in the Bible, scholars and laypeople alike. Together, these collected histories create a volume that takes the study of women in the Bible to a new level.

The Rise of Yahwism

The Image and the Book

Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible

One God - One Cult - One Nation

How the Worship of a Goddess Affected the Activities of Women in Iron Age II Megiddo

## **Monotheism in Ancient Israel and the Veneration of the Goddess Asherah**

*'Origin Myths and Holy Places in the Old Testament' examines the biblical narratives which describe the origins of holy places. It argues for the Hellenistic origin or redaction of most of these narratives. Three central questions are addressed: are there common features in biblical accounts about the foundation of places of worship; are there elements in the aetiological stories that reveal the 'real' mythology/rituals of the sanctuary; what were the circumstances of the creation of such narratives?*

*Who was the mother goddess of the ancient religion of Israel, the spouse of the god Yahweh? Archaeological and literary-biblical studies refer to her as "Asherah," yet, they cannot explain why this name is not mentioned in the book of Genesis, a book that portrays the formation of Israel's religion. In this groundbreaking book, Dvora Lederman-Daniely provides an answer to this enigmatic question. Based on meticulous research she argues the goddess's name does appear in the book of Genesis but it is concealed within the name of the first human matriarch of the people of Israel: Sarai. Deciphering and identifying the forgotten and censored name of the divine spouse of Yahweh opens the door to a revolutionary understanding of the relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel, as perceived during the formation of the Hebrew people. Moreover, biblical images and metaphors are stripped back and their outrageous mythological content is laid bare. Through careful argument Lederman-Daniely excavates the very origins of Jewish customs and decrees exposing how they embody the ancient worship of a goddess who was Yahweh's spouse.*

*Goddesses often are labeled as one-dimensional forces of nature or fertility. In examining a number of goddesses whose primary role is sovereignty, this volume reveals the rich diversity of goddess traditions. Drawn from a variety of cultural and historical settings, the goddesses described here include Inanna of ancient Sumer, Oshun of Nigeria, and Cihuacoatl of pre-historical America.*

*Good and evil, clean and unclean, rich and poor, self and other. The nature and function of such binary oppositions have long intrigued scholars in such fields as philosophy, linguistics, classics, and anthropology. From the opening chapters of Genesis, in which God separates day from night, and Adam and Eve partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, dyadic pairs proliferate throughout the Hebrew Bible. In this groundbreaking work melding critical exegesis and contemporary theory, Saul M. Olyan considers the prevalence of polarities in biblical discourse and expounds their significance for the social and religious institutions of ancient Israel. Extant biblical narrative and legal texts reveal a set of socially constructed and culturally privileged binary oppositions, Olyan argues, which instigate and perpetuate hierarchical social relations in ritual settings such as the sanctuary. Focusing on four binary pairs--holy/common, Israelite/alien, clean/unclean, and whole/blemished--Olyan shows how these privileged*

*oppositions were used to restrict access to cultic spaces, such as the temple or the Passover table. These ritual sites, therefore, became the primary contexts for creating and recreating unequal social relations. Olyan also uncovers a pattern of challenge to the established hierarchies by nonprivileged groups. Converging with contemporary issues of power, marginalization, and privileging, Olyan's painstaking yet lucid study abounds with implications for anthropology, classics, critical theory, and feminist studies.*

*The Hebrew Goddess*

*Did God Have a Wife?*

*Hierarchy in Biblical Representations of Cult*

*Under Every Green Tree*

*The Fall and Rise of the Sacred Feminine in the Judeo-Christian Tradition*

*The Making of the Cult Image in the Ancient Near East*

*A Reader*

(BAR S636, 1996)

The Israelites' religious history is easily found documented in the Hebrew Bible. Certain aspects of their religion, though, have been expanded upon by the use of archaeology, especially looking at the idea of popular religion versus state religion. This study focused on the cultic worship of the goddess, Asherah, in the city of Megiddo, during the Iron Age II period. Both the religious cult and gendered spaces were analyzed in order to evaluate the extent that the state religion was involved in cultic worship, as well as to understand how women's economic and social activities were affected by the worship of Asherah. The information may then add to our understanding of the ancient Israelite's internal religious debate over what was deemed orthodox and it will further other studies about women's important economic roles in patriarchal societies.

Provides a ground-breaking new interpretation with which to consider and contextualize the name Yahweh before its relationship with Israel.

This book provides a complete historical overview of the Mother Goddess and her influence. All of the major female goddesses found throughout history are covered.

Has Archaeology Buried the Bible?

Sarai

The Hidden Goddess

The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah

The Cult of the Mother-goddess

Is She the Goddess of Ancient Israel?

The Cult of the Mother Goddess

*In this masterful commentary, respected biblical scholar Bruce Waltke carefully interprets the message of the prophet Micah, building a bridge between Micah's ancient world and our life today. Waltke's Commentary on Micah quickly distinguishes itself from other commentaries on this book by displaying an unprecedented exegetical*

thoroughness, an expert understanding of historical context, and a keen interest in illuminating the contribution of Micah to Christian theology. Tackling hard questions about date and authorship, Waltke contends that Micah himself wrote and edited the nineteen sermons comprising the book. Waltke's clear analytical outline leads readers through the three cycles of Micah, each beginning with an oracle of doom and ending with an oracle of hope, decisively showing that hope wins over doom. Learned yet amazingly accessible, combining scholarly erudition with passion for Micah's contemporary relevance, this book will well serve teachers, pastors, and students alike.

The view of ancient Israelite religion as monotheistic has long been traditional in Judaism, Christianity and Islam, religions that have elaborated in their own way the biblical image of a single male deity. But recent archaeological findings of texts and images from the Iron Age kingdoms of Israel and Judah and their neighbourhood offer a quite different impression. Two issues in particular raised by these are the existence of a female consort, Asherah, and the implication for monotheism; and the proliferation of pictorial representations that may contradict the biblical ban on images. Was the religion of ancient Israel really as the Bible would have us believe? This volume provides a comprehensive introduction to these issues, presenting the relevant inscriptions and discussing their possible impact for Israelite monotheism, the role of women in the cult, and biblical theology.

Few topics are as broad or as daunting as the God of Israel, that deity of the world's three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, who has been worshiped over millennia. In the Hebrew Bible, God is characterized variously as militant, beneficent, inscrutable, loving, and judicious. Who is this divinity that has been represented as masculine and feminine, mythic and real, transcendent and intimate? *The Origin and Character of God* is Theodore J. Lewis's monumental study of the vast subject that is the God of Israel. In it, he explores questions of historical origin, how God was characterized in literature, and how he was represented in archaeology and iconography. He also brings us into the lived reality of religious experience. Using the window of

***divinity to peer into the varieties of religious experience in ancient Israel, Lewis explores the royal use of religion for power, prestige, and control; the intimacy of family and household religion; priestly prerogatives and cultic status; prophetic challenges to injustice; and the pondering of theodicy by poetic sages. A volume that is encyclopedic in scope but accessible in tone, The Origin and Character of God is an essential addition to the growing scholarship of one of humanity's most enduring concepts.***

***The Hidden Goddess delves into the Bible to uncover the goddesses that have been buried within it. As well as discussing familiar figures such as Eve and Mary, the book also features Asherah, Sophia, Lilith, and others, exploring their histories, their roles in early Judaic Christian belief and their subsequent suppression. '...a readable and accessible antidote to the stereotype that the divine feminine is absent in the biblical traditions. A great resource for women and men seeking the Goddess in unlikely places. Professor Mary Ann Beavis, Ph.D., St. Thomas More College***

***The Early History of God***

***Yahweh before Israel***

***Its Structure and Membership***

***From the First Fragments to Sacred Scripture***

***The Roots of Israelite Monotheism***

***The Quest for the Divine Feminine in the Judeo-Christian Tradition - from Asherah to Mary Magdalene***

***Women in Scripture***

The historical and literary questions about ancient Israel that traditionally have preoccupied biblical scholars have often overlooked the social realities of life experienced by the vast majority of the population of ancient Israel.

Volumes in the Library of Ancient Israel draw on multiple disciplines -- such as archaeology, anthropology, sociology, and literary criticism -- to illumine the everyday realities and social subtleties these ancient cultures experienced.

This series employs sophisticated methods resulting in original contributions that depict the reality of the people behind the Hebrew Bible and interprets these scholarly insights for a wide variety of readers. Individually and collectively, these books will expand our vision of the culture and society of ancient Israel, thereby generating

new appreciation for its impact up to the present. Patrick Miller investigates the role religion played in an expanding circle of influences in ancient Israel: the family, village, tribe, and nation-state. He situates Israel's religion in context where a variety of social forces affected beliefs, and where popular cults openly competed with the "official" religion. Miller makes extensive use of both epigraphic and artefactual evidence as he deftly probes the complexities of Iron Age culture and society and their enduring significance for people today.

An investigation into the evidence for the worship of Asherah in pre-exilic Israel and Judah.

The Cult of Asherah in Ancient Israel and Judah Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess Cambridge University Press

Nathan MacDonald examines the term 'monotheism' and its appropriateness as a category for analysing the Old Testament. He traces the use of 'monotheism' since its coinage in 1660 and argues that its use in Old Testament scholarship frequently reflects a narrowed, intellectualistic conception of religion. Finally, MacDonald's volume is a valuable contribution to the discussion because it is also a fine example of biblical theology, a truly insightful exposition of some of the significant themes in the book of Deuteronomy, accompanied by a fine, detailed exposition of crucial passages in the book. [...] This book is highly recommended for all who are interested in the debate concerning biblical monotheism and the larger study of Israel's religious identity. Robert Gnuse in *Biblica*, Vol. 86 (2005), No. 4, 558-560 This is one of the most significant and exciting books of biblical theology I have read for some time, illustrating how the Bible can come to life when critical attention is paid to the contemporary context of its interpretation. Philip Jenson in *Themelios*, Vol. 29 (2004), No. 2, 56-57

A Study of Aetiological Narratives

Glimpses of History in a Divine Name

The Materiality of Power

The Asherah in the Old Testament

The Origin and Character of God

Explorations in the Social History of Ancient Israelite

Magic

The Origins of Biblical Monotheism

Recent archaeological and biblical research challenges the traditional view of the

history of ancient Israel. This book presents the latest findings of both academic disciplines regarding the United Monarchy of David and Solomon ('One Nation') and the cult reform under Josiah ('One Cult'), raising the issue of fact versus fiction. The political and cultural interrelations in the Near East are illustrated on the example of the ancient city of Beth She'an/Scythopolis and are discussed as to their significance for the transformation in the conception of God ('One God'). The volume contains 17 contributions by internationally eminent scholars from Israel, Finland and Germany. According to the Bible, ancient Israel's neighbors worshipped a wide variety of gods. In recent years, scholars have sought a better understanding of this early polytheistic milieu and its relation to Yahweh, the God of Israel. Drawing on ancient Ugaritic texts and looking closely at Ugaritic deities, Mark Smith examines the meaning of "divinity" in the ancient near East and considers how this concept applies to Yahweh.

The Hebrew Goddess demonstrates that the Jewish religion, far from being pure monotheism, contained from earliest times strong polytheistic elements, chief of which was the cult of the mother goddess. Lucidly written and richly illustrated, this third edition contains new chapters of the Shekhina.

The Image and the Book is a richly documented and provocative collection of studies and essays dealing with the historical background of biblical ban on religious images. It describes the role and theology of the divine image in the civilizations surrounding Israel, and shows that there has been long-standing worship of images in Israel. Though the Bible intimates that Israelite religion was aniconic from the very beginning, the archaeological evidence and the dispassionate analysis of the available texts shows otherwise. The iconographical remains yield a fascinating view of the development and varieties in the cult of religious images. The iconoclasm of influential currents in the late Israelite and early Judaic religion went in tandem with the promotion of the Book of the Law as a substitute of the image. In the case of the Bible, the rise of book religion must be seen in conjunction with the battle against images.

Evidence for a Hebrew Goddess

A Reassessment of 'Asherah'

The Ancient Near East

The Significance of Israelite Cultic Items in the Bible and its Early Interpreters

Born in Heaven, Made on Earth

Only One God?

Deuteronomy and the Meaning of "Monotheism"

*Bringing the Bible and ancient Israel into a new and brighter light In the last several decades, archaeological evidence has dramatically illuminated ancient Israel. However, instead of proving the truth of the Bible—as an earlier generation had confidently predicted—the new discoveries have forced us to revise much of what was thought to be biblical truth, provoking an urgent question: If the biblical stories are not always true historically, what, if anything, is still salvageable of the Bible's ethical and moral values? Has Archaeology Buried the Bible? simplifies these complex issues and summarizes the new, archaeologically attested ancient Israel, period by period (ca. 1200–600 BCE). But it also explores in detail how a modern, critical reader of the Bible can still find relevant truths by which to live.*

*The Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible gathers nearly 5,000 alphabetically ordered articles that thoroughly yet clearly explain all the books, persons, places, and significant terms found in the Bible. The Dictionary also explores the background of each biblical book and related writings and discusses cultural, natural, geographical, and literary phenomena--matters that Bible students at all levels may encounter in reading or discussion. Nearly 600 first-rate Bible authorities have contributed to the Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible. Intended as a tool for practical Bible use, this*

*illustrated dictionary reflects recent archaeological discoveries and the breadth of current biblical scholarship, including insights from critical analysis of literary, historical, sociological, and other methodological issues. The editorial team has also incorporated articles that explore and interpret important focuses of biblical theology, text and transmission, Near Eastern archaeology, extrabiblical writings, and pertinent ecclesiastical traditions--all of which help make the Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible the most comprehensive and up-to-date one-volume Bible dictionary on the market today.*

*'This book re-addresses the concepts of neighbourhood and community in a refreshing and challenging way. It will be of immense benefit, not only to town planners but also to all those professional and voluntary groups and politicians who seek to create the new communities of tomorrow' From the Foreword by Jed Griffiths, Past President of the Royal Town Planning Institute. There is widespread support for the principle of creating more sustainable communities, but much hazy, wishful-thinking about what this might mean in practice. In reality, we witness more the death of local neighbourhoods than their creation or rejuvenation, reflecting an increasingly mobile, privatized and commodified society. Sustainable Communities examines the practicalities of re-inventing neighbourhoods. It is neither an idealistic, utopian tract nor a designer's manual, but is, rather, a serious attempt to address the real issues. This collection of expert contributions: \* examines the nature of local community and methods of building social capital \* presents the findings of a world-wide survey of eco-neighbourhoods and eco-villages with case studies from the United Kingdom, Europe, America and Australia \* develops a fresh perspective on the planning and design of neighbourhoods in urban areas, based on the eco-system approach \* explores practical programmes for local resource management and the implications for community-based decision-making \* provides a detailed appendix listing current eco-village and eco-neighbourhood schemes by country Written by an interdisciplinary team of social and environmental scientists, town planners and urban designers, this is a thought-provoking and important contribution to both the theory and practice of the development of sustainable communities.*

*The Hebrew Bible differs on which cultic items used in worship were appropriate for use within YHWHism. By analyzing passages mentioning "high places" (bamot), sacred trees (asherim), etc., this study finds many cultic practices were acceptable.*

*Gods, Goddesses, and the Women Who Serve Them*

*Rites and Rank*

*Asherah and Figurines*

*Women in the Hebrew Bible*

*Ancient Israelite Religion Through the Lens of Divinity*

*When God Had a Wife*

*The Making of the Bible*

A wide-ranging study of women in ancient Israelite religion. Susan Ackerman has spent her scholarly career researching underexamined aspects of the world of the Hebrew Bible—particularly those aspects pertaining to women. In this collection drawn from three decades of her work, she describes in fascinating detail the worship of goddesses in ancient Israel, the roles women played as priests and prophets, the cultic significance of queen mothers, and the Hebrew Bible's accounts of women's religious lives. Specific topics include: the "Queen of Heaven," a goddess whose worship was the object of censure in the book of Jeremiah Asherah, the great Canaanite mother goddess for whom Judean

women were described as weaving in the book of Kings biblical figures considered as religious functionaries, such as Miriam, Deborah, and Zipporah the lack of women priests in ancient Israel explored against the prevalence of priestesses in the larger ancient Near Eastern world the cultic significance of queen mothers in Israel and throughout the ancient Near East Israelite women's participation in the cult of Yahweh and in the cults of various goddesses The authoritative new account of the Bible's origins, illuminating the 1,600-year tradition that shaped the Christian and Jewish holy books as millions know them today. The Bible as we know it today is best understood as a process, one that begins in the tenth century BCE. In this revelatory account, a world-renowned scholar of Hebrew scripture joins a foremost authority on the New Testament to write a new biography of the Book of Books, reconstructing Jewish and Christian scriptural histories, as well as the underappreciated contest between them, from which the Bible arose. Recent scholarship has overturned popular assumptions about Israel's past, suggesting, for instance, that the five books of the Torah were written not by Moses but during the reign of Josiah centuries later. The sources of the Gospels are also under scrutiny. Konrad Schmid and Jens Schröter reveal the long, transformative journeys of these and other texts en route to inclusion in the holy books. The New Testament, the authors show, did not develop in the wake of an Old Testament set in stone. Rather the two evolved in parallel, in conversation with each other, ensuring a continuing mutual influence of Jewish and Christian traditions. Indeed, Schmid and Schröter argue that Judaism may not have survived had it not been reshaped in competition with early Christianity. A remarkable synthesis of the latest Old and New Testament scholarship, *The Making of the Bible* is the most comprehensive history yet told of the world's best-known literature, revealing its buried lessons and secrets.

Goddesses Who Rule

Popular Religion in Sixth-century Judah

A Study According to the Textual Sources of the First Two Millennia B.C.E.

Yahweh's Council

A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the

Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books and the New Testament

Iconic Cults, Aniconism, and the Rise of Book Religion in Israel and the Ancient Near East

An Essential Guide