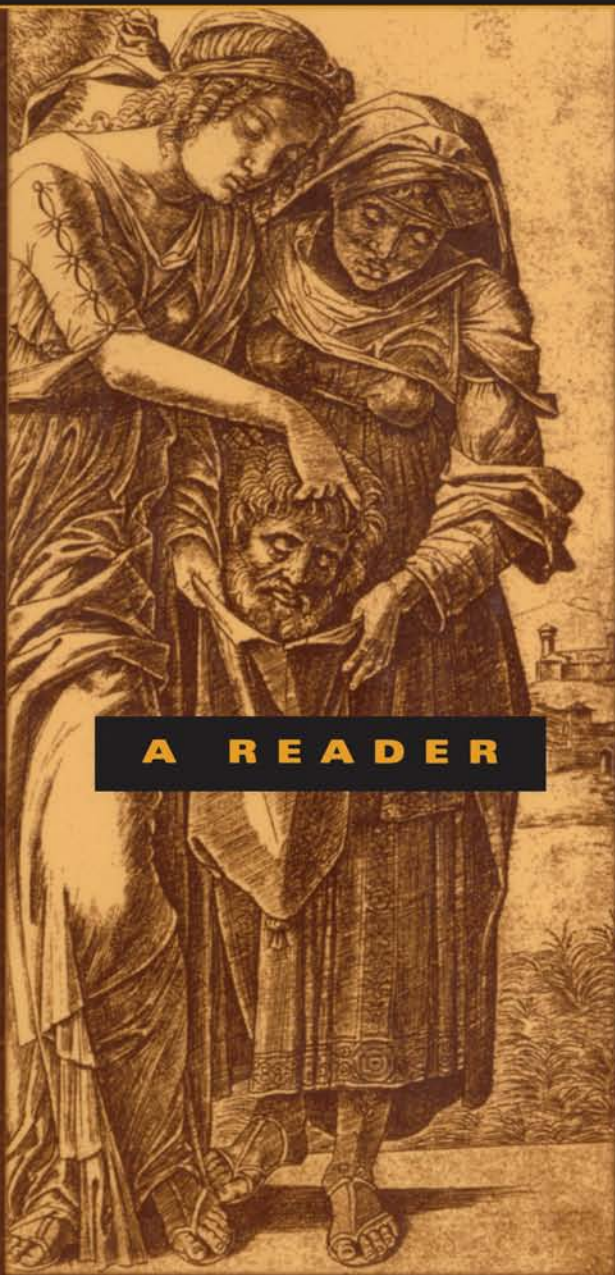


WOMEN IN THE HEBREW BIBLE



A READER

**EDITED
BY**

ALICE BACH

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*For Mary Callaway and Jennifer Glancy,
Women of the Book*

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Editor's Note

In putting together this Reader I sought the advice of a number of colleagues, who were thoughtful and helpful in suggesting articles. Mieke Bal, Athalya Brenner, Cheryl Exum, Ed Greenstein, and David Gunn were particularly generous with their time. As with any Reader, the main difficulty is having about three times as much important scholarly material as one can fit into the publisher's requirements for the project. It is a joy to announce that there are many more stimulating articles and books devoted to questions about the status of women in the ancient Near Eastern world, feminist readings of biblical and extrabiblical texts from the ancient Mediterranean world, and a growing dialogue of sophisticated concerns by scholars adapting literary, sociologic, anthropologic, and cultural methodologies to the biblical corpus. To ease my own frustration with selection I have included a very full bibliography of articles and books where many of these items can be found. Engaging the articles in this Reader is the beginning of a process, of climbing deep into the roots, to the places where women and the Bible intersect.

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Introduction

Man's World, Women's Place Sexual Politics in the Hebrew Bible

ALICE BACH

For many women the most difficult part of reading the Bible today is remembering how we read the Bible in school, in church or synagogue, and what we were told about the good women and the bad women. As a test of this premise, think of what the names Eve, Jezebel, Delilah evoke. In a 1938 film, Bette Davis played a flirtatious girl with too-easy morals. Her name and the name of the film: Jezebel. Could you trust a woman named Delilah with a pair of scissors? Would you eat food offered by a curious Eve? These stock interpretations of female biblical characters are part of the cultural baggage we lug around. For most women the baggage weighs a bit heavier than it does for men.

The major objective of this Reader is to examine attitudes toward women and their status in the ancient Near Eastern societies, focusing on the Israelite society as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible. What has been traditionally studied as “history” is really the history written by the winners, the dominant societies; the record of the male-dominant, authoritarian, and war-centered societies. Thus, a central challenge is to explore ways in which we can reach the stories of women in a world shaped by male interests. As modern readers who have experienced abrupt changes in social attitudes, especially in respect to issues of gender, sexuality, and marriage, we shall read these ancient texts conscious that our modern attitudes challenge traditional values. Thus, we shall have to read with bifocal lenses: aware of our modern attitudes while simultaneously understanding the religious and cultural traditions and practices that shaped ancient texts.

Even though we will be concentrating upon literary texts about women, the texts that we shall read were not written by women. A major difficulty in coming to conclusions about the lives of women in the ancient world is that almost all the texts about women have been written by men. We have no direct evidence about what women thought, said, or felt (except for some fragments of the classical Greek poet Sappho's lyrics and some funerary inscriptions). We have only male blueprints for female behavior.

The stories are men's imaginings about women: the good wives who support men's dreams and the seducers who lead men astray. Of course, these writers chronicled women's lives more subtly than the designations of wives and witches, bad girls and sad girls, might indicate. There are women whose courage saves the community; there are goddesses whose ferocity as warriors is matched by their passionate love-making. One of the most confounding questions for gendered readings of these texts is why there was such an enormous gap between the powerful goddesses and the dramatic female literary heroes, and the low status of real women?

Several questions will run through our investigation of women in the ancient world. The most central question concerns whether men's descriptions of women's roles reflect actual societal behavior or whether they are fantasies that run counter to the familiar. Is the detailed delineation of *the perfect wife* in Proverbs 31 a reflection of a real woman or merely a man's dreamy construction? Another question that confronts the modern reader concerns the ways in which these religious and literary texts function to preserve patriarchal society. Must the texts be read as supportive of traditional social values?

Some feminist historians and archeologists, especially Maria Gimbutas and Riane Eisler, argue against the standard view that the beginning of European civilization is marked by the emergence in ancient Greece of the Indo-Europeans. Instead, these scholars consider the arrival of the Indo-Europeans as the truncation of European civilization. Gimbutas calls this period the civilization of Old Europe. There was a pastoral, peaceful agrarian society—and, most important, both matrifocal and matrilineal. It was the incursions of barbarians who brought “the angry gods of thunder and war,” writes Eisler, “and everywhere left destruction and devastation in their wake.” This view has not been accepted by mainstream scholars, and I do not include it here to convince the reader that once upon a time was really once upon an ideal women-centered time. Rather, I include this view to illustrate two things, which I believe are connected. One is the desire on the part of feminist scholars to prove that a matriarchal world would be one of peace and serenity; the other is the difficulty that feminist scholars have in getting their work taken seriously by the mainstream.

It is tempting to imagine a society where domination and destruction did not exist, and that the creation and maintenance of such a world should be credited to women, but I would caution the reader against replacing a view of male domination with that of female domination. A second caution involves giving too much weight to societies that worshiped female gods as well as male ones or instead of male gods. There is no proof that such a society would be matriarchal. Imagine concluding that a society in which women were idealized was matriarchal. Several images come to mind: the outpouring of grief and the mounds of flowers, candles, and notes left at Kensington Palace following the death of Princess Diana. Clearly one could not conclude that the British people were a goddess-centered society worshiping the spirits of nature. Or think of female American film stars who become icons, but not in a world dominated by the power of women.

To call women spiritual and peace-loving and to describe men as violent and destructive is to continue polarization of gender. Through readings of the female characters in the Hebrew Bible, one finds warrior women like Judith and Jael, and men calling for peace and justice, like the prophets Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. One finds Abigail, a woman who can manage a large estate with equanimity, and Saul, a king whose fearsome visions leave him a helpless victim. Thus, a responsible feminist reading is not one that

dreams of matriarchy and imagines a world in which women are in control as a spiritual realm that enhances life. The key word is power, for any hierarchized power structure is going to award power to some and deny it to others. For me, a successful feminist interpretation of a biblical narrative text will not be biased in favor of women or put the blame for humanity's ills only at the feet of men.

In the Wilderness

Another central task of exchanging Man's World for Women's Place involves reading these ancient texts for clues about the beginning of gender bias in Western culture. Our literary and cultural heritage is so heavily textured with these patterns that we think they are natural. From the time of Homer and the Bible we have been taught this is the way it should be, the way society is supposed to function. Part of our work in this Reader, then, will be to peel away the ideology from the story. The following sections of this Introduction will raise some issues that will jump-start the peeling process.

What, then, are some theoretical problems occurring within the early feminist literary studies (1980s) found in the edited collections of Collins, Russell (1985), and Tolbert (*Semeia* 28)? Since the figures of women are usually fragmented in the Bible, feminists in this formative period wishing to offer literary studies generally followed one of two roads: (1) they exposed through close readings the patriarchal portrait of an individual woman, which has led to a gallery of biblical female victims; (2) they focused upon scraps of linguistic, rhetorical, and narratologic evidence to highlight feminine aspects of the deity and feminine echoes or ghosts in the text, popularly known as "recovering submerged female voices." Both these feminist strategies have, in my opinion, a limited future. The time for gleaning is bound by the time for reaping. Feminist critics need not, however, discard the model of Ruth, playing the patriarchal game to get her needs fulfilled. Rather, like Ruth they need to join their male colleagues on the threshing floor, where who leads and who follows is not determined by the text. There is finite ground to be worked so long as gleaning fragmented portraits of women is the goal of feminist readings. As more feminist scholars enter the field as gleaners, the number of female figures left to pump up as heroes or to deflate as victims of male authorship is dwindling. Thus, our readings need to be more nuanced, not a case of good woman, bad woman—that slaps a judgment on any woman who questions authority. Through transdisciplinary readings of biblical figures and other literary figures, one can develop a three-dimensional interpretation.

It must be said emphatically that scores of valuable insights have been offered in these first-wave analyses of female literary figures; many interesting readings of isolated narrative units within the biblical corpus have been offered by feminist scholars. But like the texts they have read, the insights have been fragmented and have not resulted in advances in feminist biblical literary theory. So following one path, that of creating a "portrait" of a biblical female figure, results in her continued isolation. Comparing the characters in the Bible with other literary figures is another strategy that can be used to avoid static portraits of these characters. It might be helpful to think of future readings as films rather than paintings, more kinetic than static. We need examples of female figures within the continuous movement of text, frame upon frame.

Some feminist scholars, such as Claudia V. Camp, J. Cheryl Exum, and Carol A.

Newsom have begun to explore the social and cultural causes of the pain so carefully delineated in Phyllis Trible's *Texts of Terror*. Employing a rhetoric of rupture and rebellion, in order to provide contemporary relevance to ancient Western literary texts, they have analyzed biblical texts without a theological lens. Camp's work has provided us with exciting new models of metaphorical analysis, in her sophisticated investigation of the gendered images of woman wisdom. Accepting the phallogocentric nature of biblical texts in which female characters have been silenced by their male creators, Exum is no longer satisfied with an examination of the formalist patterns and conventions discovered through surface readings. Her most recent work reflects her concern for looking at the way the Bible has been appropriated by visual artists in various time periods. Similarly, Newsom has recognized that traditional readings of literary texts not only represent ideology, but also in circular fashion support it as well. Another important scholar of both ancient and modern Jewish texts, Esther Fuchs, has continually adopted the stance of a marginal reader, questioning the ideology of whatever biblical text she is analyzing. She reads with a clear-eyed regard for gender as a social product, an institution, yet remaining within the biblical canon as a closed universe presented problems too.

Feminist Theologies

To seek a coherent pattern in biblical portraits of women is bound to marginalize women unless one lays bare the social, cultural, and gender codes reflected in the texts. Feminist biblical critic Mary Ann Tolbert admits that her own feminist analysis reveals "bias in favor of the Bible. I frankly want to claim that text as a continuing resource for living in the modern age." While it is salutary to find a critic who self-consciously acknowledges her own theological biases, a problem with the faithful perspective is that the furthest it can extend is to observe the positions in the male landscape where women are hidden or drawn poorly, lacking perspective and depth. After a nod to diversity among feminist theologies, Elizabeth Achtemeier concludes that "if God is addressed in female terms, however, his holy otherness is lost sight of" (55), learned through and perpetuated by culture.

Judith Plaskow rereads traditional Jewish interpretation, trying to reclaim a place for women at Sinai (1990). I also recommend Plaskow's challenge (1978) to Christian feminists about inherent anti-Semitic attitudes on the part of Christian scholars who portray ancient Judaism as a patriarchal tradition in contrast with the liberating elements of Christianity. Another important Jewish feminist theologian is Susannah Heschel. What is vital to both Plaskow and Heschel is their new wave of doing theology. Not only do they challenge male domination, but they also point up the Christocentric assumptions and perspectives of many feminist theologians.

While the focus of this Reader is not feminist theologies, a field in which much bold work is being done, I would like to call the reader's attention to the voices of Katie Cannon, Cheryl Gilkes, Jacqueline Grant, and Renita Weems as womanist (African-American) scholars, Ada-Maria Isasi-Diaz, a *mujerista* (Latina) theologian, and Hyun Chung, who uses Eastern sources to enrich and extend Western Christian models. Each of these scholars examines racial and sexist biases within interpretive scholarship of traditional male theologians, creating syncretistic theologies, rich in story-telling of women's struggles to reshape the male traditions that had been imposed upon them. Other

important collections of third-world feminist hermeneutics are edited by Tamez; Fabella and Lee; Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye. These collections offer strategies for removing the racist and colonialist blinders of women theologians within the discipline (See the bibliography of recent works in both feminist and womanist theology, p. 533).

Analyzing and Recovering the Social World of Ancient Israel

Another avenue that seems to offer particular promise is the reading of the social codes within a literary work. Here the work of several feminist scholars is notable: Phyllis Bird, Carol Meyers, and Tikva Frymer-Kensky. These scholars attempt to read biblical narratives against the context of the dominant traditions and cultural milieu of the ancient world. When we place the text within the legal and social structures in which ancient authors and readers found themselves, the net of patriarchy emerges not as a villainous trap for women but rather as the canvas on which the whole world, male and female, was painted. The early work of Carol Meyers and Phyllis Bird in the area of social perspectives has paralleled the first wave of literary critics: an attempt to preserve and applaud biblical stories within the traditions in which women found themselves. Instead of presenting portraits of particular literary figures, Meyers and Bird have sliced the text according to socially relevant figures, e.g., the prostitute and the Iron Age Israelite woman. While this work has produced important insights into the status of women, the problem is again one of isolation, the subject of women not integrated into the society or compared cross-culturally with the position of women in similarly constructed societies.

As Bird herself has noted in an elegant response to her own earlier work, "Religion defined in male terms or according to male models has difficulty placing women and assessing their piety, whether it imitates men's, in which case it rarely achieves parity, or assumes distinctive female forms, which may either go unacknowledged or be identified with foreign or heterodox cults." The shift in Bird's perception, asking of herself new questions about women's religion in ancient Israel, quite probably involving a syncretistic form of religious expression within the Yahwistic cult, heralds an exciting advance in studying gender-differentiated systems of ancient religion. Bird's perspective suggests to me a profitable strategy for feminist scholars whose methods are undergoing change. Acknowledging the movement in one's own perceptions from an earlier position is a feminist move that allows the critic to subject her work to self-analysis and to trace its development. The influence of the discipline of anthropology is clear within Bird's work. Deconstructive literary theory has pointed to the importance of analyzing the ideology of a literary work to Cheryl Exum and thus suggests to her a rereading of an earlier work on the function of the women in Exodus 1–2 (*A Feminist Companion to Exodus–Deuteronomy* 1994). This article from Exum points up the vital understanding that even feminist readings are not absolute, permanent, immutable.

Goddesses and Popular Religion

What do we do about the goddesses, those elusive female figures, stronger than human males, more dangerous than male deities, who represent not real women but the dreams of real men? Frymer-Kensky argues that the descent of the goddess from power to powerless is simple and linear. Each reader can make up her own mind, after reading

the selections from the Mesopotamian and Canaanite religious epics. My reading of the Sumerian and Canaanite corpus reveals that *the* goddess does not exist; rather, there are diverse goddesses, who are dominant/triumphant in some texts and duped/victimized in others. Their loss of power is often regained in later texts, refuting the concept of linear descent. The images of the goddesses also changed according to the fortunes of the city for which she was a tutelary deity, or the social context in which each found herself, e.g., the powerful first-century cult of the syncretistic Isis, whose ancestors were to be found in the cultures where Frymer-Kensky situates their demise. Neither Frymer-Kensky nor I have a lock on the interpretations of these texts. Make up your minds. It is the power that each reader possesses.

Certainly the work of those trying to unearth the popular religion of ancient Israel including goddess worship will add important dimensions to our understanding of the ancient patriarchal theological agenda. One of Carole Fontaine's major concerns has been an exploration of whether patriarchal texts can speak the reality of women's lives. She searches for a model to evaluate the status of ancient women and the relationship of that status to the presence of goddesses and their worship. Similar concerns drive Peggy Day's interest in popular religion, which has led to engaging work on the Canaanite goddess Anat.

Feminist Studies of the Mediterranean World

Moving among ancient narratives that remain outside the canon is another strategy that opens the gate to move outside the literary zone of narratives of character. Bernadette Brooten has demonstrated that women served as leaders in a number of synagogues during the Roman and Byzantine periods. Amy Jill Levine's work offers literary readings that remain within a historical framework and seek out social context. Not remaining within either biblical canon, Levine has applied sophisticated feminist cultural criticism to both Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian texts. Ross S. Kraemer's studies in ancient Greco-Roman and Jewish texts have allowed the beginnings of cross-cultural work. These extracanonical scholars have helped to grasp a moment in time: When did gender become hierarchized and when did literary texts first reflect this hierarchy? While there is clearly no grasping this ephemeral instant, I have argued elsewhere that reading classical, biblical, and Hellenistic texts together provides some examples of what happens to female literary figures framed within the entrenchment of the wife/wicked woman dichotomy. The frame-up has simultaneously supported and reflected the "gender-conditioning" that has deprived us of female literary heroes.

Literary Theories

The work of literary scholars whose academic credentials are not within the discipline of biblical studies has sometimes been treated with suspicion by some members of the biblical guild. Recently, literary scholars such as Regina Schwartz, Nelly Furman, and Susan Lanser have gained limited notice for dealing with biblical narratives. Schwartz approaches the text as a literary scholar, and Furman as a feminist critic; both are engaged in critical rereadings of the established canon. Lanser spans both categories. Their

work has not, however, changed the direction of biblical studies or the focus of scholars within the biblical guild. That primary challenge was taken up by another literary scholar, now awarded acclaim by the usually hermetic biblical guild: Mieke Bal, a literary and cultural theorist who has challenged and enlivened the scope of biblical investigations with feminist postmodern readings. Bal's sustained effort of several years' focus upon the Bible has resulted in three major works of literary theory, related to feminism not only through the analysis of literary texts but also as a cultural and political force that needs to be acknowledged throughout the society.

Not surprisingly, Bal is relentless in delineating the implicit codes—the moral, religious, and aesthetic codes—that too often go unnoticed in a text, “smuggled in like contraband,” she says. These are the voices that are so familiar we tune them out. But they are also the cultural conventions that attempt to control meaning, to preserve the status quo. To affirm the connections between texts and the actualities of human life, politics and events, one must unmask the implicit codes, make them explicit. By using a method of examining codes from various academic disciplines, as well as the thematic and gender codes that cross disciplinary lines, she demonstrated in *Murder and Difference* that the codes lead the reader “far into the understanding of the text and its cultural background, but at the same time they reveal to what degree their bias imposes, stimulates, or permits a practice of censorship that stems from the restriction and the institutionalization of codes” (9).

Privileging one code, allowing it the voice of authority, does not reflect social realities. Codes, like the communities that construct them, coexist as a panoply of voices. To silence any one is to risk domination by another. Understanding the necessity for the reader to oscillate between codes, Bal has presented a challenge to biblical interpreters to deconstruct traditional interpretations of texts as well as the texts themselves to demonstrate the ways in which ancient biases entwine modern readers, especially women.

If Phyllis Tribble cracked open the geode of biblical narratives in the 1970s, then Mieke Bal is the scholar who proclaimed a decade later that the crystals were not all from the same geode. One must recognize, of course, the limits to any one scholar's theorizing, given the vantage point of her or his interests, training, and situation. In discussing the development of feminist biblical scholarship, it is tempting to identify winners and even greater winners. But the search for a Perfect 10 is surely antithetical to feminist theories of support and inclusion. While biblical literary scholars have begun to hail Bal's work as plotting a new direction in biblical studies, one needs to acknowledge the threat inherent in trying to build a comprehensive theoretical context for the practice of feminist theory. Interestingly enough, it is interpreters of Bal's work rather than the critic herself who has made such extravagant claims. Rather than continuing to explore the discourse between the biblical text and its subsequent interpreters, her most recent work is focused upon eliminating another set of traditional disciplinary borders, those between visual and literary works. Bal's *Reading “Rembrandt”* (1991) explores problems pertaining to the interpretation of verbal and visual art. The method that Bal employs in juxtaposing iconography with narratology tempts other interpreters into deeper and more complex incursions into interdisciplinarity.

Bal's importance to scholars of the Bible, therefore, is not that she has resolved the differences between feminist readers and traditional scholars, or that she has concluded

the search for methods of feminist investigation, but rather that she has created a most fertile ground for conscientious debate. One element of Bal's strategy that has not yet been sufficiently examined is the homogeneous, biased position of traditional interpreters. Even though one can uncover the ideological bias inherent in these interpretive texts, too often the blinders of race, class, and even of theology have stayed in place. Thus, reading the canonical unit and its traditional interpretive accompaniment have not escaped the well-defended borders of class, ethnicity, and race that are common to both ancient and modern biblical scholars. As more scholars pursue the continuing discourse we have with past interpreters, we will need to cut through partisan antagonisms as well as the adversarial roles that may be more easily defined. Clarifying issues is not enough; they need to be debated, refusing to grant either authors and editors or traditional commentators of biblical texts the authority they seek to control interpretation.

Reading about Reading the Bible

In the land of biblical thought, I hear the old warnings echoing from the ancient authors. When female figures such as Ruth, Hannah, and Tamar long to preserve the Covenant by having sons, they are rewarded, not only with the desired male heir but also with narratorial praise. What the paradigmatic story leaves out is that women could not own property. Without a son to protect her, a widow had to depend on the generosity of her husband's brothers. Or worse, she had to return to her own brothers, who had families of their own to care for. Another silent element is that one in four women in the ancient Near East died in childbirth. To pray to become pregnant was a life-threatening wish.

When women become curious, like the woman in the Garden for a taste of that mysterious fruit, or Lot's wife for a last glimpse of home, they are cast out. Women are not encouraged to reach out for the fruit of knowledge, no matter how tempting. When women try to form communities, they do not fare well either. Dinah goes out to visit the women of the land (Genesis 34) and gets raped by Shechem. After wandering the hills with her female companions, the daughter of Jephthah returns home to be sacrificed, a result of her father's foolish vow (Judges 11). Leah and Rachel gnaw at each other, more eager to possess Jacob than to share female commonality. And I tire from the always steep climb up the rocky face of patriarchy.

Rules of the Game

It is important to note the sly nature of categories. We hear of the good women in the Bible and the bad ones. Think carefully before following those assignments. When learning the rules of the game (according to the patriarchal rulers), keep in mind that the values of good women (wives) and bad (sexual temptresses) found in the book of Proverbs are not exclusively the rules of the Hebrew tribes. Compare the portraits of women and the warnings about women found in the Greek writer Hesiod, whose *Theogony* and *Works and Days* are contemporaneous with Homer and close in time to the world that produced the book of Proverbs. The Bad Girls may well be considered Good Girls in another time or by another culture: the Warrior Women are good only if the reader or the reading community shares their victories.

Whose Game Is it, Anyway?

When you are reading the story of the Woman in the Garden (Genesis 2–3), it may be helpful to compare it with a fragmented text from the Nag Hammadi Library, “The Hypostases of the Archons,” a text that parallels the Genesis text, but one that values the actions of the woman, that prefers the desire for knowledge over obedience. Elaine Pagels’s introduction to *The Gnostic Gospels* presents an excellent overview of the subject of suppressed theological texts in the Bible. Karen King’s edited volume, *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism: Studies in Antiquity and Christianity* (1988), provides insightful scholarly articles on various gnostic texts, laying out the problems these texts raise as well as making suggestions about the female deities who are their subject.

Understanding ancient beliefs about the physical bodies of men and women and ancient views of sexuality in the Mediterranean world, is also important for filling out a critical portrait of the male authors who wrote about women. You will find valuable source material in Aristotle’s *Generation of Animals* as well as in the medical texts of Hippocrates and Galen.

Feminists Changing the Rules of the Game

As you will see from the lists of stories about women—Good and Bad, Warrior and Victim—many of the characters are both good and bad, both warrior and victim. There is no one slot into which the characters fit. (Note: The Table of Contents of this Reader reflects the difficulty of assigning topics to a group of articles.) A central task of the feminist Reader is to present interpretations in which the female characters are nuanced, not merely categorized. Thus, Delilah is a wicked woman if you are a reader loyal to Samson. But if you are a Philistine, then Delilah is a warrior hero, like Deborah or Judith or Jael. Speaking of Jael, she would hardly be a hero in the eyes of the mother of Sisera. Would Rebekah be a “good mother” to Esau, or Sarah to Ishmael? Judith is a hero to the Israelites she saved, but let’s not forget that she beheaded a man, as surely as Jael drove a tent-peg through Sisera’s skull. Good or bad, venerable or vixen?

Wives

Sarah (Hagar) and Abraham	Genesis 16, 20
Rebekah & Isaac	Genesis 26
Leah (& Rachel) & Jacob	Genesis 28–33
Hannah (& Pennina) & Elkhanah	1 Samuel 1–2
Michal & David	1 Samuel 17

Good Girls

Tamar	Genesis 38
Shiprah and Puah	Exodus 1–2
Acsah	Judges 1
Abigail	1 Samuel 25
Rizpah	2 Samuel 21
Bathsheba	2 Samuel 11–12; 1 Kings 1–2
Ruth	The Book of Ruth
Esther	The Book of Esther

Susanna	Additions to the Book of Daniel
Judith	The Book of Judith (apocryphal)

Bad Girls

Eve, The Mother of All Living	Genesis 2–4
The Wife of Potiphar	Genesis 39
Delilah	Judges 16
Michal	2 Samuel 6
Bathsheba	2 Samuel 11–12
Jezebel	1 Kings 16–21; 2 Kings 9
Vashti	Esther 1–2

Sad Girls

Lot's Daughters	Genesis 19
Dinah	Genesis 34
Jephthah's Daughter	Judges 11–12
The Bride of Samson	Judges 13–14
Levite's Concubine	Judges 19–20
Tamar	2 Samuel 13

Women Warriors

Miriam	Exodus 15; Numbers 11–12
Deborah and Jael	Judges 4–5
Judith	The Book of Judith

Amazing Women

Medium of Endor	1 Samuel 28
Wise Women of Tekoa	2 Samuel
The Playmate of God	Proverbs 8

Ordinary Women

Are there ordinary women in these narratives? Is Sarah, who gives birth at the biblical age of ninety, an ordinary woman? Are Shiprah and Puah, who go against the Pharonic law of the land in Exodus 2, ordinary? Are the Sad Girls ordinary? Are rape and death and losing your life to male vows and/or male anger ordinary? Is Miriam, the prophet and sister of Moses and Aaron, ordinary? Compare her with a nameless woman in the back of the long line of people leaving Egypt in the Exodus narrative. A nameless woman who has never met Moses, does not understand why they are going on this terrible, hard journey, and gets no answers from anyone around her. It is part of the task of a feminist reader to keep an eye on the nameless women and men at the back of the line, at the edge of the battle, far away from King David's court.

Angels in the House: Female Deities in Israel

While the focus of this Reader has been the narratives of women in the Hebrew Bible, there is the question of gender and the divine that must not be overlooked. While the mainstream theologians who produced the final authoritative version of the Hebrew narratives maintained that there was one God, YHWH, male, celibate, lacking in history

and family, there are certainly shadows of goddess worship that appear in the Bible. In this Reader are important articles on goddess worship by Ackerman and Fontaine. I would recommend further reading among contemporary scholars on this central subject of the reception and repression of Anat and Asherah, and goddess worship in ancient Israel. Among the most illuminating, in my opinion, are Umberto Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath; Canaanite Epics of the Patriarchal Age* (Eng. trans. 1971); the very quirky but stimulating *Violent Goddess: Anat in the Ras Shamra Texts* (1969) by Arvin Kapelrud; and Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddess* (1993). Also important are Saul Olyan, *Asherah and the Cult of Yahweh in Israel*; and articles by William Dever, "Asherah, Consort Of Yahweh?: New Evidence from Kuntillet 'Ajrud," and Umberto Cassuto, "The Epic Of Baal." On the subject of Anat, see Neal Walls, *The Goddess Anat in Ugaritic Myth*. A fine translation of the Baal/Anat cycle of texts from Ugarit is edited by Mark S. Smith: *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle* (1994). Not surprisingly, not all of these works are written from a feminist perspective. At this writing, the most complete scholarship on real women and goddesses in the Mediterranean world are Sarah Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* and Ross Kraemer's *Maenads, Martyrs, Matrons, Monastics: A Sourcebook on Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World*.

A Subversive Companion for Reading Ancient Texts

I have included questions to jump-start your reading of the articles in the Reader. Also ask yourself these feminist questions while you are reading the ancient texts, searching for the scent of a woman. How does the identity of a woman reader/interpreter influence the reading of male texts? Can women positively appropriate androcentric texts as authoritative texts for their religious experience? How can a man read like a woman?

1. *What sort of text am I reading?*

Is this a narrative, legal text, allegory, medical/scientific text, ritual text? Was this text originally a spoken text or a written text? Keep in mind that the biblical stories were written down after centuries of oral transmission. Where is the woman, then, in this process of male generation of texts? Undoubtedly, women had their own dreams, personal desires, and secrets. Can we find them embedded in these male-authored texts?

2. *What does this text tell me about the ancient social world?*

These ancient biblical texts were written by men. Thus, we are reading texts about women written by men. What conclusions do the texts lead us to draw about good women and bad ones? How do you react as a reader to the male image of the ideal wife? Keep in mind that women also support the social order that envisions a sexual hierarchy: men in the outside world and women inside; the hunter and the keeper of the hearth. For background on the ancient Mediterranean world, see Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: Women's Religions among Pagans, Jews, and Christians in the Greco-Roman World* (1992); and Pomeroy, *Women's History and Ancient History* (1991) and *Families in Classical and Hellenistic Greece: Representations and Realities* (1996). For views on Jewish women in early rabbinic times, see Brootten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues* (1982).

Look at the list of qualities of the good woman in Proverbs 31: Would you want to live the life of such a woman? Would you want to be married to such a woman? Hmmm.

3. *How does the text reflect and support the patriarchal structure of Western society? Can I as a reader stand outside this structure and cast off the underpinnings of misogyny?*

The first part of this question assumes that there is a patriarchal structure to Western society. The challenge of our communal endeavor is to read against the grain of the text, to come up with readings that acknowledge the roots of authority that have shaped these texts but to resist becoming imprisoned in the conventional reading that concludes “that’s the way it’s supposed to be.” In her book, *Plotted, Shot, and Painted* (1996), J. Cheryl Exum illustrates a variety of ways in which feminist readings can break free of the patriarchal text.

4. *What images of female goodness does this text present? How do I feel about the angel in the house?*

It seems that the ideal woman that male authors dream of (and create in their narratives) is an angel. Virginia Woolf has observed that the “angel in the house” is the most pernicious image male authors have ever imposed upon literary women. Is this image more pernicious than that of the wicked women, the female fiends who use their femaleness to entrap and destroy men?

5. *Do the good woman, the angel in the house, and her sister, the serpentine siren, have stories of their own? Can you uproot her story from inside his story?*

You will add to this list of questions as you struggle against the familiarity in these biblical texts. The questions are at the core of our work as feminists: they are the currency we pay when we attempt to define ourselves in unacceptable ways.

Recipes for Reading: Who’s Reading the Text

Reading is seen traditionally as a transparent activity, like breathing, which we either do not think about or, if we do, believe we understand quite well. A readerly concern, by contrast, problematizes reading—which is to say, wonders what it is that is going on, and how whatever it is actually works. It is only recently that scholars have begun to analyze what happens when one reads, that is, how the reader makes meaning from the words of a text. Texts do not have meanings that readers proceed to discover. In some way or other, the creation of meaning arises at the intersection between text and reader. Thus, scholars have learned to focus upon the reader rather than upon the author or the text itself to understand how meaning happens.

The combination of the reader’s own interests, values, and commitments is what makes her or him a person with identity and integrity. Each reader of texts, including biblical texts, brings her or his own prejudices, biases, and presuppositions to the task of reading. Each person has and should become conscious of her or his own agenda for interpretation, that is, the mutual transaction between text and reader. Of course, a feminist concentrates not only on the female characters in a narrative, but also upon the social context of power and authority in the society in which the narrative takes place. And never to be overlooked in a literature as old as the Bible is how one’s own agenda has

influenced the hundreds of years of interpretation that overlay our own readings. Thus, a feminist reading of a biblical text will take into account the agenda of the interpreter—be it a rabbi or church father with theological issues on his mind, or a poor landless outsider, who wonders whatever happened to the Canaanites, and who spoke for them.

1. *What does the text say or fail to say about the reader's own set of issues?*

As biblical scholar David Clines once advised,

If you are a pacifist vegetarian feminist and do not immediately see these issues developed in biblical texts, do not discard the text and do not allow the text or earlier interpreters to set the agenda and change your focus. Look for clues that touch your issues. Stewardship of the earth and its creatures bears on your agenda, even if it is not specifically headlined pacifist, vegetarian, or feminist. This is an example, not everyone is expected to share the agenda of our fictional feminist pacifist vegan.

2. *Do not allow the text to set the agenda.*

In learning to identify the process of reading, one needs to learn how writers write. The strategies that writers use involve plotting, delineation of character, use of dialogue, and silence contrasted with speech. In reading biblical narratives, it is critically important to distinguish between the author and the narrator, the early audience or ideal reader and the contemporary reader. Try to separate the voice of the narrator from the voices of the characters he (we are probably dealing with male narrators in these male-authored texts, although the narrator is anonymous) describes as either male and female. Keep in mind that the male narrator is “gazing” at the scene he describes (the narratorial term for this is “focalization”).

3. *Learning to read all over again . . .*

In trying to unravel and expose the strategies of the author, ask of the narrative the three big questions:

WHO SPEAKS WHO SEES WHO ACTS

Follow the thread through the narrative labyrinth and ask yourself
 whose story is told fully (or more fully) than the other characters'
 whose agenda is fulfilled in the story
 which characters are approved of and disapproved of by the narrator
 whose agenda supports the social order

4. *Try to read a text with alternative interpretations.*

The sheer possibility of a different reading shows that the reader can cast off the dominance of the established “acceptable” reading. The possibility of dominance, that attractiveness of coherence and authority in culture, is the source rather than the consequence of sexism. A major point of literary analysis is to realize that there is no one universal truth, and where the truth is absent, women and ethnic minorities can creep in and rewrite themselves back into the history of ideology. Once you have identified the dominant agenda—that is, the one that supports the social order—turn the text on its head to find a reading too long suppressed.

5. Reading as women (not just for women only).

Turning the text on its head is what feminists do. Any time any reader reads against the grain of the text, reads with a suspicious eye toward how the narrator wants you to read, you are performing a feminist reading. Focusing on the presence or absence of women in the text makes the reading a gendered one, not the eyes of a woman reading the text. Of course, one can also focus on the characterizations of the men in the story to do a “masculinist” reading, also a gendered reading. Traditional interpreters of texts used to refer to masculinist readings as “the truth.” Both women and men need to examine male roles in the biblical texts. Are all the male characters in the text equally privileged? Are the marginalized males in a better position than the female figures who are married to the powerful males? Finally, do remember in your reading and interpreting of texts that qualities such as compassion, tenderness, gentleness, as well as violence, cruelty, anger are not inherently gender based. That is, do not fall into the interpretive trap of stereotyping either male or female characters.

*The Social World of Women
in Ancient Israel*

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The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus

PHYLLIS BIRD

Despite the timeliness of the question posed in the title of this essay, it is not a new one in the history of Old Testament scholarship.¹ It occasioned lively debate at the turn of the century, in terms remarkably similar to arguments heard today. A key figure in that early debate was J. Wellhausen, whose analysis of Israelite religion emphasized its masculine, martial, and aristocratic nature, positing an original coincidence of military, politicolegal, and religious assemblies, in which males alone had full rights and duties of membership.² Others argued that women were disqualified from cultic service by reference to an original ancestral cult of the dead which could be maintained only by a male heir.³ A further argument associated women's disability or disinterest in the Yahweh cult with a special attraction to foreign cults or pre-Yahwistic beliefs and practices involving local numina.⁴

Underlying these arguments and assumptions concerning the marginal or subordinate status of women in the Israelite cultus was a common understanding of early Israel as a kinship-structured society of nomadic origin, whose basic social and religious unit was the patrilineal and patriarchal family.⁵ Though it was the agricultural village with its assembly of free landowners that Wellhausen had in mind when he correlated political and religious status, the principle he articulated had broader applicability: "Wer politisch nicht vollberechtigt war, war es auch religiös nicht."⁶ Women, who were disenfranchised in the political realm, were disenfranchised in the religious realm as well.

Stated in such terms of disability—or disinterest and disaffection—the widely held view of women's inferior status in the Israelite cultus, exhibited in the critical historiography of the period, elicited vigorous rebuttal in a series of studies aimed at clarifying, and defending, women's position in ancient Israelite religion and society.⁷ While the arguments and conclusions of these studies differed, the general outcome was to demonstrate that women's participation in the religious life of ancient Israel was in fact broader and more significant than commonly depicted.⁸

Today many of the same arguments and much of the same evidence put forward in the earlier discussion are being employed once more in a renewed debate over the androcentric and patriarchal character of Israelite religion.⁹ This time, however, the discussion appearing in scholarly publications, or in works by biblical scholars, is fueled by a debate arising outside the academy and borne by a literature that is primarily lay-oriented and largely lay-authored, a literature marked by the anger and urgency of profound existential and institutional conflict.¹⁰ Modern feminist critique of the Bible as male-centered and male-dominated has elicited widely differing historiographical and hermeneutical responses, ranging from denial of the fact or intent of female subordination to rejection of the authority of the Scriptures as fundamentally and irredeemably sexist.

In the current debate, with its heavy charge of personal and theological interest, the biblical historian has a limited but essential contribution to make by isolating and clarifying the historical question. The task of Old Testament historiography must be to determine as accurately as possible the actual roles and activities of women in Israelite religion throughout the Old Testament period and the meaning of those roles and activities in their ancient socioreligious contexts. The question for the historian today is the same as that addressed to earlier scholars, but it must be answered in a new way—because of new data, new methods of analysis, and a new understanding of history. The following is an attempt to set forth a rationale and a plan for that new answer.

The question about the place of women in the Israelite cultus exposes a defect in traditional historiography—beginning already in Israelite times. It is a question about a forgotten or neglected element in traditional conceptions and presentations of Israelite religion, which typically focus on the activities and offices of males. Where women appear at all in the standard works, it is in incidental references, as exceptional figures, or in limited discussions of practices or customs relating especially to women. This skewed presentation may be explained by the limits of the available sources and may even be understood as an accurate representation of the Israelite cultus as a male-constituted or male-dominated institution. But it can no longer be viewed as an adequate portrait of Israelite religion. The religion of Israel was the religion of men and women, whose distinctive roles and experience require critical attention, as well as their common activities and obligations. To comprehend Israelite religion as the religion of a people, rather than the religion of males, women's roles, activities, and experience must be fully represented and fully integrated into the discussion. What is needed is a new reconstruction of the history of Israelite religion, not a new chapter on women. Until that is done, the place of women in the Israelite cultus will remain incomprehensible and inconsequential in its isolation, and our understanding of Israelite religion will remain partial, distorted, and finally unintelligible.

A first step toward this integrated reconstruction must be an attempt to recover the hidden history of women and to view the religion through their eyes, so that women's viewpoint as well as their presence is represented in the final account.¹¹ The obstacles to that effort are immense, but, I shall argue, not insurmountable. They do, however, require that critical attention be given to methodology before any reconstruction can proceed. That being the case, this chapter can offer no more than a highly provisional sketch of the assigned subject, prefaced by a summary of the methodological study that forms the essential introduction.

Preliminary Methodological Considerations

1. Two fundamental shifts in focus or perspective are necessary to the reconstruction I have proposed: (*a*) The cultus must be understood in relation to the total religious life in all of its various forms and expressions, “private” as well as public; heterodox, sectarian, and “foreign” as well as officially sanctioned;¹² and (*b*) religious institutions and activities must be viewed in relation to other social institutions, such as the family, and in the context of the total social, economic, and political life. While both of these shifts are essential to an understanding of Israelite religion as a total complex, they have particular consequence for the understanding of women’s place and roles.

2. The information needed to give a fully adequate account of the place of women in Israelite religion, including the cultus, is in large measure unavailable—and unrecoverable—from either biblical or extrabiblical sources. We have at best isolated fragments of evidence, often without clues to context. As a consequence, any reconstruction must be tentative and qualified. The same, however, is true, though in less extreme degree, of our knowledge of men’s roles, and demands similar caution and qualification. Our fullest and best information is partial and skewed.

3. A comprehensive and coherent account of Israelite religion and of women’s place in it requires the use of an interpretive model, not only to comprehend the available evidence but also to locate, identify, and interpret missing information—which is often the most important.¹³ The blanks in the construct are as essential to the final portrait as the areas described by known data. They must be held open (as the boxes in an organizational chart)—or imaginatively filled—if the structure is not to collapse or the picture is not to be rendered inaccurate or unintelligible. The primary means of filling the blanks is imaginative reconstruction informed by analogy.

4. The closest analogies may be found in other ancient Near Eastern societies. They are limited, however, by dependence on written documents, most of which come from the spheres of men’s activities and reflect male perspectives.

5. Modern ethnographic studies of individual societies and institutions and cross-cultural studies of women’s roles in contemporary non-Western societies can aid the Old Testament historian in formulating questions and constructing models.¹⁴ Such studies are especially valuable for their attempts to view societies as total systems as well as for their attention to features that native historians and lay members of the society may overlook or deem unimportant. Because they do not depend on written records but are based on observation and interview of participants, they give us access to women’s roles and experience that is otherwise unavailable.

6. Androcentric bias is a pervasive feature of the ancient sources, their subjects, and their interpreters. It has also characterized most anthropological research and writing until recently.¹⁵

Summary of Findings of Cross-Cultural Studies

The most important finding of cross-cultural studies for a reconstruction of women’s religious roles in ancient Israel is the universal phenomenon of sexual division of labor, which is particularly pronounced in pre-industrial agricultural societies.¹⁶ Basic

to this division of labor is an understanding of women's primary work as reproductive work, including care of children and associated household tasks, with a consequent identification of the domestic sphere as the female sphere, to which women's activities may be restricted in varying degrees.¹⁷ This fundamental sexual division of labor has far-reaching consequences for the status and roles of women in the society as a whole as well as their patterns of activity and participation in the major social institutions. In all of the primary institutions of the public sphere, which is the male sphere, women have limited or marginal roles, if any. Thus leadership roles in the official cultus are rarely women's roles or occupied by women.¹⁸

Conversely, however, women's religious activities—and needs—tend to center in the domestic realm and relate to women's sexually determined work. As a consequence, those institutions and activities which appear from public records or male perspective as central may be viewed quite differently by women, who may see them as inaccessible, restricting, irrelevant, or censoring. Local shrines, saints and spirits, home rituals in the company of other women (often with women ritual leaders), the making and paying of vows (often by holding feasts), life-cycle rites, especially those related to birth and death—these widely attested elements of women's religious practice appear better suited to women's spiritual and emotional needs and the patterns of their lives than the rituals of the central sanctuary, the great pilgrimages and assemblies, and the liturgical calendar of the agricultural year.¹⁹ But the public sphere with its male-oriented and male-controlled institutions dominates and governs the domestic sphere, with the result that women's activities and beliefs are often viewed by "official" opinion as frivolous, superstitious, subversive, or foreign.²⁰

Women in Israelite Religion and Cultus: Observations and Hypotheses

We have argued that an adequate understanding of the place of women in the Israelite cultus requires attention both to the place of the cultus in the total religious and social life of the society and to the place of women in the society—including consideration of the society's understanding of male and female nature, capacities, and inclinations and its organization and assignment of male and female roles, activities, rights, and duties. Despite the efforts of the Israelite cultus to exert a controlling influence over the total life of the society and despite its significant stamp on the culture, the cultus must still be seen as one institution among others, influenced by general social and cultural norms, especially as they define appropriate male and female roles and activities. Consequently, we should expect significant correspondence between women's roles and status in the cultus and in the society as a whole. Three prominent elements of that general understanding of women's nature and duty have direct bearing on women's place in the cultus: (1) the periodic impurity of women during their reproductive years;²¹ (2) the legal subordination of women within the family, which places a woman under the male authority of father, husband, or brother, together with a corresponding subordination in the public sphere in which the community is represented by its male members; and (3) an understanding of women's primary work and social duty as family-centered reproductive work in the role of wife-mother.

The effect of each of these determinants is to restrict the sphere of women's activities—spatially, temporally, and functionally. Only roles that were compatible with women's primary domestic-reproductive role and could be exercised in periods or situations free from ritual taboo, or from the requirement of ritual purity, were open to women. While restrictions also existed on men's ability to participate in particular cultic roles and activities (e.g., economic constraints on offering vows and sacrifices and restriction of priestly office to members of priestly families), these did not affect all males as a class. A significant distinction between male and female relationships to the cultus may be seen in the fact that for women, but not for men, conflict between social and cultic obligation is a recurring phenomenon—which is resolved by giving priority to social demands. Examples may be seen in the annulment of a woman's vows by her father or husband (Num 30:1–15)²² and in the “exemption” of women from the requirement of the annual pilgrim feasts (Exod 23:17; 34:23; Deut 16:16). In both of these cases one may argue that responsibility to the family is the underlying principle and that it is understood as a religious, not merely a social, obligation; but a contrast remains between the understanding of a male and a female religious obligation.²³

This explanation assumes a conflict of duty or interest (defined socially, not individually) as grounds for women's limited role in the Israelite cultus, but the limitation might also be explained by an understanding of the cultus as an originally, or essentially, male institution or association. The evidence suggests that there is truth in both views.

Wellhausen was surely right in recognizing behind the generic language of many texts and translations a cultus conceived and operated as a male association to which women were related, if at all, in a marginal and mediated way. Evidence for an understanding of the cultic community as fundamentally a body of males is substantial. While the best examples relate to the early period, they are not confined to it: for example, the prescription for the pilgrim feasts (“Three times in the year shall all your males appear before the Lord God,” Exod 23:17; cf. Deut 16:16); the instructions to the “people” at the mountain of God (“Be ready by the third day; do not go near a woman,” Exod 19:15); the tenth commandment (“You shall not covet your neighbor's wife,” Exod 20:17); and other injunctions, exhortations, blessings, and so forth, that address the cultic community as male (“Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord. . . . Your wife will be like a fruitful vine,” Ps 128:1–3; “Jeremiah said to all the people and all the women,” Jer 44:24).

Further evidence may be seen in the Hebrew onomasticon, where theophoric names describing the individual as a worshiper or votary of the deity (names compounded with *ʿebed*/*ʿōbēd*, i.e., “servant of”) are reserved to males and have no female counterpart—in contrast to Akkadian and Phoenician practice.²⁴

Objections to Wellhausen's view that seek to show broad participation of women in religious and cultic activities fail to challenge his basic argument, which is not that women were prohibited from participation, but rather that their participation was not essential and that it played a less central or less important role in women's lives than in men's. Wellhausen's insight was also sound in positing an “original” coincidence or congruence of military, legal, and cultic assemblies; the three represent the primary institutions of the public sphere, which is everywhere the sphere of male activity. His understanding of the correspondence of rights and duties in these overlapping realms can also be substantially affirmed, though areas of divergence require greater attention together

with cases of status incongruity. A further modification is required by the extension of both the cultic and the legal spheres beyond the circle of males to encompass the broader community.²⁵ As a consequence, women, who were excluded from the governing or representative institutions of both (namely, the priesthood and the cultic assembly, and the council of elders and the assembly of landholders), were nevertheless brought within their spheres of interest and authority.²⁶ Thus women possessed dual status in the legal and cultic realm, being members of the outer circle governed by the community's norms but restricted in varying degree from the inner circle where the norms were formulated, inculcated, and rationalized.

In the cultic realm, differentiation of roles is associated with a hierarchy of offices and prerogatives ordered according to a concept of graduated degrees of holiness (represented spatially, e.g., in the plan of the Temple and its courts). At the center, which is also the apex of authority, stands the priest or high priest, surrounded by other members of the priesthood and/or other orders of cultic personnel (the local shrine represents the simplest form of cultic leadership, invested in a resident priest—and his family—while the Temple cultus occupies the other end of the spectrum, with its elaborate, graded system of special orders and offices). Beyond the priesthood stand members of the community (more specifically, the free citizens), bound by duty of pilgrimage, addressed directly by the cultic proclamation and having limited rights of sacrifice (varying according to period). The outer circle is represented by women, dependents, and resident aliens. They are also addressed by the cultic proclamation, but usually indirectly; both their hearing and their response is commonly mediated by a male guardian.

While this scheme gives a general picture of the relationship of women to the Israelite cultus, it must be qualified in a number of ways, especially with regard to changes or variations in internal and external relationships over the Old Testament period, some of which appear to have significant consequence for the nature and extent of women's participation. Factors requiring consideration include the number of cultic centers, the types of activities associated with them, and the relationships among them; the status and affiliation of the cultic personnel, the degree of centralization, and the extent of professionalization or specialization of cultic maintenance roles; and the relationship of the central cultus to other institutions and spheres of life.

While this chapter does not permit detailed study of the complex assortment of data embedded in the Old Testament text, a summary review of the more prominent features of the major periods may help to provide a context for a series of concluding hypotheses concerning patterns of participation and changes in women's relationship to the cultus.

The fullest and richest evidence for women's religious activity is found in literature pertaining to the premonarchic period, which also provides the richest portrait of women in leadership roles. We see Miriam leading the Israelites in a song of victory at the sea (Exod 15:20–21), punished for claiming equality with Moses as one through whom the Lord had also spoken (Num 12:2), and ranked with Aaron and Moses as leaders of the people (Num 12:2–8; Mic 6:4);²⁷ women “ministering” at the tent of meeting (Exod 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22); Deborah honored as a “mother in Israel” (Judg 5:7), as a judge and a prophet summoning the forces of Israel to holy war at Yahweh's command and accompanying them into battle (Judg 4:4–10; 5:7, 12–15), and as a singer of Israel's victory through Yahweh (Judg 5:1); Jephthah's virgin daughter “initiating” an annual ritual of

mourning by the daughters of Israel (Judg 11: 34–40);²⁸ Micah's mother commissioning an image for the family shrine established by her son (Judg 17:1–13, esp. v 4); women dancing at the yearly feast at Shiloh (Judg 21:19–21); Hannah and Peninnah accompanying their husband on his annual pilgrimage to Shiloh and sharing the portions of the sacrifice (1 Sam 1:1–4); and Hannah, weeping, praying, vowing at the sanctuary, and finally paying her vow with the dedication of the child (1 Sam 1:9–28). In these images we see most of the roles attested in the later period.

Sources pertaining to the period of the monarchy and to the postexilic period expand the references to heterodox practices and sharpen the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate roles and activities. Two female prophets, Huldah (2 Kgs 22: 14–20) and the unnamed *nēbī'ā* of Isa 8:3, are the only women portrayed in approved cultic roles.²⁹ The rest are viewed as illegitimate. These include references to *qēdēšōt* (Hos 4:14; Deut 23:18);³⁰ to queens and queen mothers who introduced foreign cults and cult objects (Maacah—1 Kgs 15:13; Jezebel—1 Kgs 18:19 [cf. 16:31–32]; Athaliah—2 Kgs 11:18; cf. Solomon—1 Kgs 11:1–8); to women weaving vestments for Asherah (2 Kgs 23:7); and to women baking cakes/burning incense for the Queen of Heaven (Jer 7:17–18; 44:15–25), weeping for Tammuz (Ezek 8:14), and engaging in sorcery (“prophesying”—Ezek 13:17–23). Postexilic literature yields only a prophet opponent of Nehemiah (Noadiah—Neh 6:14), showing a continuation of women in the class of prophets.³¹ The number and nature of references to women's religious roles and activities during the monarchy appear to reflect the consequences of the centralization of the cultus under royal control and a tendency, culminating in the Deuteronomic reform, to brand all worship at the local sanctuaries idolatrous/promiscuous.³²

Evidence from the patriarchal traditions depicts a family-centered or clan type of cultus in which the patriarchs perform all of the roles of sacrifice and blessing and are portrayed as founders of various local shrines or cults (Gen 22:9–14; 26:23–25; 28:18–19; 35:6–7, 14–15).³³ Rachel's stealing of the teraphim (as cultic objects belonging to her father) is further witness to clan-based religious practice, but it tells us nothing about women's religious roles. Her audacious and amusing act of theft and coverup in which she “protects” the sacred objects by professing defilement does not describe the institutionalization of an action. Rachel remains a dependent as she cleverly assists her husband in robbing her father.

Summary Generalizations

The following is an attempt to summarize the evidence in a series of preliminary generalizations.

Women in Cultic Service

1. Leadership of the cultus appears at all times to have been in the hands of males (though with differing patterns and sources of recruitment into the leadership group). Women, however, were not excluded absolutely from cultic service or sacred space, though increasing restriction is suggested, correlated with increasing centralization, specialization, and power (at least in Judah) under a royally sanctioned Zadokite priesthood. Persistence of women in cultic roles in the later period is identified in the canonical texts with heterodox practice.

2. The attested roles of men and women in the service of the cultus appear to exhibit a sexual division of labor corresponding closely to that discernible in the society as a whole.

a. Males occupy the positions of greatest authority, sanctity, and honor and perform tasks requiring technical skill and training. They preside over the presentation of sacrifices and offerings,³⁴ have charge of the sacred lots, interpret the sacred law and instruct the congregation, pronounce blessing and curse, declare absolution and pardon, and guard the purity of the sanctuary and the worshipers; that is, they perform the priestly service in both sacrificial and oracular functions. Priestly office in Israel, as in the rest of the ancient Near East, was reserved to males. Contrary to popular opinion, Israelite Yahwism was not distinguished from the surrounding religions by its rejection of women in priestly office, but conformed to common practice.³⁵ The Israelite cultus in its basic institutional forms appears to have shared the essential features of the cultus known in surrounding cultures.

b. Women's cultic service seems to have been confined largely to maintenance and support roles, essential to the operation of the cultus but not requiring clergy status—or prescription in texts concerned with the proper performance of the required rituals. Since these roles are poorly documented in the biblical sources, we can only speculate based on chance clues, parallels in domestic life, and the suggestions afforded by comparative studies of cultic organization and maintenance elsewhere in the ancient Near East. The following tasks appear likely (further suggestions must await a fuller study of comparative materials): the weaving and sewing of vestments, hangings, and other textiles for cultic use;³⁶ the preparation of cultic meals or foods used in the ritual;³⁷ and the cleaning of cultic vessels, furniture, and quarters.³⁸

c. Some references to women associated with the cultus point to more public and representative or symbolic roles, suggesting a need to include within the cultus activities or attributes specifically identified with women, for example, as singers and dancers³⁹ or as attendants in the sanctuary. Both the *šōbēʾôt* (Exod 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22)⁴⁰ and the *qēdēsôt* (Gen 38:21–22; Deut 23:17; Hos 4:14)⁴¹ are associated with the service of the sanctuary, though the exact nature and form of their respective service remains unclear. Both represent classes rejected or superseded by the normative cultus that preserved the record of their existence, suggesting that they played a larger role (for a longer period of time) than the meager references would at first intimate. The identifying symbol or implement of the former group (a mirror) and the innuendo in references to the latter suggest that in both cases female sexuality was a significant aspect of the role.

d. If we posit any specialized service of women within the cultus, we must also consider the social organization that would enable permanent or continuous (short-term or long-term) cultic activity. Since women's place in society is determined by their place within the family, women are not normally free to operate for extended periods outside this sphere. The well-known exceptions are the widow, the prostitute, and the hierodule. Two possible arrangements may be suggested to account for women's service in the Israelite cultus. One would see the women as members of priestly families, hence resident at or near the sanctuary and sharing in some degree the special sanctity of the priest, which would give them access to the sacred space. The other would assume that they are women without families (whether widows, virgins, or women separated from their families by a vow). In the latter case we may expect, as in the case of the various classes of

Babylonian hierodules, that the cultus will assume the authority and control of father or husband and that restrictions, comparable to those applying within the family, will be placed on the woman's sexual activity for the duration of her service (whether as a prohibition of sexual activity or of having or keeping children).

e. Women might also on occasion play a role in the royal cultus through their roles in the ruling house. A queen, in the absence of a male ruler (or in the presence of a weak one), might assume the role of titular head and patron of the state cult. Since our best Old Testament example is provided by a foreign queen (Jezebel), presiding over a foreign cult, the cultic role of the king's wife or mother may not have been as fully developed in Israel as elsewhere—or it may have been rejected. This specialized cultic role is in any case dependent upon a secular role and the particular politicoreligious relationship of the royal cultus.

3. The most important and best-documented religious office occupied by women in ancient Israel, that of prophet, stands in an ambiguous relationship to the cultus. Whatever the role of the prophet within the cultus, it was clearly not a priestly office. Since recruitment was by divine designation (charismatic gift) and not dependent upon family or status, it was the one religious office with broad power that was not mediated or directly controlled by the cultic or civil hierarchy and the one religious office open to women. Because recruitment to and exercise of the role did not depend on socially or sexually defined status but on personal attributes, it was also the one role shared by men and women, a pattern attested in Mesopotamia and in cross-cultural studies.

The lack of formal restrictions to women's assumption of the office does not mean, however, that women were equally free to exercise it. Here, as in the case of other extrafamilial roles, women were confronted with a dual vocation, which was normally—and perhaps always—resolved in favor of the domestic obligation. Women prophets probably exercised their charismatic vocation alongside their family responsibilities or after their child-rearing duties were past. As a consequence of this complementary or sequential pattern of women's prophetic activity—and as a consequence of the normal patterns of social organization, which placed women as dependents in family-centered units—one would not expect to find women organized in prophetic guilds (the professional guild is a male form of organization). Nor would one expect to find women prophets as heads of schools or having the freedom of action and access to political and cultic power that is apparent in the case of their most prominent male counterparts. It is therefore not unexpected that no prophetic books carry the names of women, and it requires no explanation of prejudice or conspiratorial silence—but rather conflict of duty, which made every woman a mother before she would exercise another vocation.

4. Some forms of cultic service by women associated with the central Yahwistic cultus were judged heterodox or foreign by the canonical sources. In addition to these references the Old Testament contains frequent references to local cults of alien gods and to foreign cults brought into the central cultus. These references, which are always polemical and usually formulated in very general terms, do not supply us with adequate information about the related cultic personnel, but presumably some of these were women (e.g., *qēdēšīm* in 1 Kgs 15:12; 2 Kgs 23:7 may be understood as an inclusive use of the generic plural). It is impossible on the basis of our sources, however, to determine whether women played a larger role in the service of non-Yahwistic cults. Evidence for a female deity or female aspect of deity as a persistent and at times, perhaps, legitimate

element of the Yahwistic cultus requires reassessment of the terms “foreign” and “syncretistic” as descriptions of discredited worship as well as a reassessment of the ritual and personnel of such cults. The sources suggest that disavowal, rather than discontinuance, of the practices and beliefs is what is indicated in the increasing and increasingly polemical attention to “foreign” cults and cultic practices in late sources.

Women as Worshipers

1. Since women rarely emerge in the text from behind the facade of generic male terminology, it is impossible to determine with certainty the extent of their participation in prescribed or reported activities. Isolated clues suggest, however, that women attended the major communal feasts and rituals, insofar as personal and domestic circumstances permitted, and presumably contributed to the preparation of meals and of food (especially grain) offerings. Animal slaughter and sacrifice, as an action of the worshiper, was reserved to males—as elsewhere generally—but this appears to have been the sole specific exclusion or reservation. In the major pilgrim feasts and other festivals at local shrines, as well as in family-based ritual meals, the woman participates as a member of a family unit. But she may also exercise her role in “the great congregation” and as “a daughter of Israel” bound by covenant law in individual acts of devotion and duty: in songs of praise (1 Sam 2:1–10) and prayers of petition (1 Sam 1:10–16), in the making and performing of vows (1 Sam 1:11, 24–28; Num 30:3–15), in seeking oracles (2 Kgs 4:22–23; cf. 1 Kgs 14:2–5), in bringing offerings, and in performing the rituals prescribed for ritual cleansing, absolution, and so forth (Lev 12:1–8; 13:29–39; 15:19–29). The locus of these activities might be the central shrine (on occasions of pilgrimage) but was surely most commonly a local shrine or holy place or simply the place of daily activity. That women’s communion with the deity was common and that women were recipients of divine communications is indicated by a number of theophany traditions—though where the response to the appearing deity takes cultic form, as in the case of Manoah’s wife, the action shifts to the male (Manoah presents the offering and questions the angel, cf. Judg 13:2–7 and 8–20).

2. Of family-centered ritual we know even less, except in the case of the Passover. We may expect in this and in other cases that the normal male and female roles in the family will be reflected in the ritual, with food preparation belonging to the women and the presiding role, reading and recitation, assumed by males. The alternative practice of segregated dining and ritual, common in Islamic custom, was more likely the rule in cultic meals of larger groups or societies formed for such purposes.

3. Peculiarly or predominantly female forms of ritual and worship are suggested in the canonical sources only in reference to heterodox cults, the clearest examples of which are the women weeping for Tammuz (Ezek 8:14) and making offerings to the Queen of Heaven (Jer 7:17–18; 44:19). Though the whole population is explicitly implicated in the latter case, the women seem to have a special role. Prophetic use of the metaphor of the promiscuous bride to describe Israel’s apostasy may reflect a special proclivity of Israelite women for “foreign” cults, but the sin that is condemned is the sin of the people, and this usage alone is insufficient to demonstrate a pattern. Of possible greater significance for an understanding of women’s religious participation and the total religious life of the community is the hidden realm of women’s rituals and devotions that take place entirely within the domestic sphere and/or in the company of other women.

Cross-cultural studies show that these often constitute the emotional center of women's religious life as well as the bulk of their religious activity, especially where their participation in the central cultus is limited. For such practices, however, we have little or no direct testimony, as this order of religious practice is generally seen as unworthy of note unless it challenges or undermines the central cultus. (Women's rites may even be unknown to men, who have no part in them.) Ceremonies and practices that belong to this category might include birth and mourning rites and other rituals of the life cycle performed in the home or the village, especially with a woman as ritual specialist; prayers; vows and their performance in such actions as holding a feast, endowing a shrine, or dedicating some prized possession; making pilgrimages; consulting mediums and seers; and participation in spirit-possession cults or rituals. The line between religion and magic or orthodox and heterodox is more difficult to draw in this realm of practice and belief since the controls of the central cultus, its priesthood and theology, are largely absent. Like folk religion everywhere, it is typically seen as debased or corrupted and often as syncretistic.

The freedom to engage in such actions may vary considerably, relating in part to the degree to which they may be seen as convergent with or contrary to cultically prescribed duties. For example, ritual prescriptions governing the state of impurity associated with childbirth draw the otherwise private birth event into the sphere of the central cultus in its attempt to maintain the purity of the people as a cultically defined community. But the satisfaction of the cultic requirement does not exhaust the ritual need associated with the birth, which may be supplied by a naming ceremony, circumcision feast, and/or special rituals to assist the mother in the birth—rituals in which a female specialist such as a midwife may play a role closely analogous to the role of a priest in other situations of crisis. Women's private rituals or actions favored by women may also be opposed by male authorities as frivolous, superstitious, costly, and unnecessary. But opposition does not always mean compliance. Women may take vows that are costly and undertake forbidden pilgrimages as actions of rebellion or flight from oppressive household responsibilities and restrictions. As religiously sanctioned actions they may offer limited relief to women whose options for action were often severely circumscribed.

4. On the boundary of the sacred sphere that is organized by the central cultus or claimed by rival cults, a sphere extended in the name of the principal deity, or deities, to the rituals of daily life, there exists a quasi-religious sphere of spirits, demons, and various malevolent or amoral forces that trouble people and over which they attempt to gain control by special knowledge and defensive action. Those skilled in discerning and controlling these forces, by sorcery, witchcraft, necromancy, medicine, or other means, may be acknowledged by the cultus as practitioners of valuable practical arts or proscribed as challenging the fundamental claims of the deity to embody or control all forms of superhuman power. While some religions might incorporate such beliefs and practices into their belief systems, Israelite Yahwism, from the time of Saul, proscribed the practices and banned the practitioners (1 Sam 23:3, 8). It has often been suggested that women had a special attraction to these quasi-religious practices, both as clients and as practitioners, and it makes sense that women should prefer to seek help for their problems from a local specialist than from a general practitioner or ritual specialist serving a remote God. That women should also constitute a significant proportion of the mediums and other specialists in spirit manipulation is also understandable. However, the Old

Testament evidence is insufficient to confirm such a pattern of preference and contains more references to male than to female classes of occult practitioners.

Conclusion

During the period reflected in the Old Testament sources there appear to have been a number of changes within the cultus and in its relationship to the population as a whole that had significance for women's participation. The progressive movement from multiple cultic centers to a central site that finally claimed sole legitimacy and control over certain ritual events necessarily restricted the participation of women in pilgrim feasts and limited opportunities for women to seek guidance, release, and consolation at local shrines, which were declared illegitimate or demolished. At the same time, increased specialization and hierarchal ordering of priestly/levitical ranks within the royal/national cultus deprived males in general (as well as Levites) of earlier priestly prerogatives, increasing the distance or sharpening the boundary between the professional guardians of the cultus and the larger circle of male Israelites who comprised the religious assembly. Reorganization of the cultus under the monarchy and again in the postexilic period appears to have limited or eliminated roles earlier assigned to women. On the other hand, there appears to have been a move (most clearly evident in the Deuteronomic legislation) to bring women more fully and directly into the religious assembly, so that the congregation is redefined as a body of lay men and women. As the priesthood becomes more powerful and specialized, the primary cultic distinction or boundary within the community becomes that between priest and laity rather than between male and female.

NOTES

1. This chapter is a preliminary and highly abbreviated form of the introduction to a book-length work (in preparation) on women in Israelite religion.

2. J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und jüdische Geschichte* (3d ed.; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1897) 89–90.

3. I. Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie* (Freiburg im Breisgau and Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr, 1894) 140, and W. Nowack, *Lehrbuch der hebräischen Archäologie* (Frieburg im Breisgau and Leipzig: J.C.B. Mohr, 1894) 154, 348.

4. See, e.g., B. Stade, *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1905) 1. 40. Cf. E. König, *Geschichte der alttestamentlichen Religion* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1912) 216 n. 1.

5. See, e.g., Benzinger, *Archäologie* (1907) 102; Nowack, *Lehrbuch*, 153–54.

6. Wellhausen, *Geschichte*, 94.

7. The earliest (1898) and most positive in its assessment was that of I. Peritz, "Women in the Ancient Hebrew Cult," *JBL* 17 (1898) 111–48. Other major studies include the following: M. Lohr, *Die Stellung des Weibes zur Jahwe-Religion und -Kult* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1908); G. Beer, *Die soziale und religiöse Stellung der Frau im israelitischen Altertum* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1919); and E.M. McDonald, *The Position of Women as Reflected in Semitic Codes of Law* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1931).

8. For an excellent review and assessment of the history of scholarship on women in Israelite religion, see chap. 1 of U. Winter's *Frau und Göttin. Exegetische und ikonographische Stu-*

dien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt (Freiburg and Göttingen: Universitäts/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983). Winter's work, which became available to me only after the completion of my initial draft, exhibits substantial parallels to my own approach and significant accord with my analysis.

9. See, e.g., C.J. Vos, *Woman in Old Testament Worship* (Delft: Judels & Brinkman, 1968); J. Otwell, *And Sarah Laughed: The Status of Women in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); and Winter, *Frau und Göttin*.

10. By "lay" I mean nonbiblical specialist. This literature, which is a product of, or response to, the modern women's movement, is largely, though by no means exclusively, written by women and is characterized by a high degree of existential involvement and political intention (protest and advocacy). In the decades since the appearance of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953; French orig., 1949), it has swelled to a flood, establishing itself as a major new category in both religious and secular publishing—and affecting the entire field of publishing in its attention to gendered language and images. While this literature treats a broad range of social, psychological, and historical issues, a recurring theme, in secular as well as religious writings, is the legacy of biblical tradition in Western understanding of the nature and status of women. Recent scholarly attention to women in the biblical world has arisen, in part at least, as an effort to correct and inform the "popular" discussion (cf. Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, 17).

11. Cf. E. Schüssler Fiorenza's groundbreaking work for the New Testament, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1983).

12. By cultus I understand the organized, usually public, aspects of religious life centered in a temple, shrine, or other sacred site, maintained by a priesthood and/or other specialized offices and roles, and finding expression in sacrifices, offerings, teaching and oracular pronouncement, feasts, fasts, and other ceremonies and ritual actions. Since our knowledge of Israelite religion is limited almost entirely to the "national" cultus and its several schools of theology or streams of tradition, it is easy to slip from analysis of the cultus to generalizations about the religion. This tendency has been qualified to some extent by the recognition that we have no direct evidence for North Israelite theology and practice and by attempts to recover and reconstruct it from elements surviving within Judean compositions. It is also being qualified by new attention to local or folk traditions of Israelite Yahwism evidenced in extrabiblical texts. The question about women in the cultus, I shall argue, raises the question about the role of the cultus in the total religious life of Israel in an even broader and more radical way.

13. The need for consciously articulated interpretive models has been convincingly argued in recent decades and needs no further defense. It does need reiteration, however, as paucity of evidence intensifies the need. For example, if we assume that the Israelite congregation was composed of all adults, we will picture women as a silent constituent even where no reference is made to their presence. But if we construe the congregation as a body of males, we must give a different account of the missing women—and of the role of the cultus in the society.

14. This is an exceedingly rich and suggestive literature combining descriptive and theoretical interests. It is also expanding so rapidly that it is impossible to list even the most important works. The following is a sample of works I have found useful: M.K. Whyte, *The Status of Women in Preindustrial Societies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); M.K. Martin and B. Voorhies, *Female of the Species* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975); M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, eds., *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974); N.A. Falk and R.M. Gross, eds., *Unspoken Worlds: Women's Religious Lives in Non-Western Cultures* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980); E.W. Fernea, *Guests of the Sheikh: An Ethnography of an Iraqi Village* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1969); E. Bourguignon et al., *A World of Women: Anthropological Studies of Women in the Societies of the World* (New York: Praeger Publishers,

1980); and S.W. Tiffany, ed., *Women and Society: An Anthropological Reader* (Montreal: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1979).

15. For efforts to identify and counter this bias and an introduction to the study of gender as a major new field of anthropological theory, see especially J. Shapiro, "Anthropology and the Study of Gender," *A Feminist Perspective in the Academy: The Difference It Makes* (ed. E. Langland and W. Gove; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) 110–29; N. Quinn, "Anthropological Studies on Women's Status" (*Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 [1977] 182–222); and S. Ortner and H. Whitehead, eds., *Sexual Meanings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

16. M. Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview," Rosaldo and Lamphere, *Women*, 18, and J.K. Brown, "A Note on the Division of Labor by Sex," *American Anthropologist* 72 (1970) 1074–78. Cf. Martin and Voorhies, *Female of the Species*, 276–332, and Whyte, *Status of Women*, esp. 156–73.

17. Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society," 26–27. See further H. Papanek and G. Minault, eds., *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia* (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1982) esp. 3–53 and 54–78; Fernea, *Guests*; and Martin and Voorhies, *Female of the Species*, 290–95. Women's activities are never completely confined to the home, but sexual division is the rule in both work and play wherever mixed groups are found. See Brown, "A Note"; P.R. Sanday, "Female Status in the Public Domain," Rosaldo and Lamphere, *Woman*, 189–206; and E. Friedl, *Women and Men: An Anthropologist's View* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975) 8. For Old Testament examples, cf. the young women (*nē'ārôt*) as distinct from the young men (*nē'ārîm*) working in Boaz's field (Ruth 2:8, 9; cf. 2:22, 23). Note the sexual division of labor described in 1 Sam 8:11–13. Cf. also Old Testament references to women drawing water (Gen 24:11; 1 Sam 9:11), grinding grain (Job 31:10; cf. Matt 24:41), cooking and baking (1 Sam 8:13; Lev 26:26), and dancing and singing (Exod 15:20; 1 Sam 18:6–7).

18. Rosaldo, "Woman, Culture, and Society," 17, 19–21. Cf. Ortner and Whitehead, *Sexual Meanings*, 4 and passim; P.R. Sanday, *Female Power and Male Dominance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); and Shapiro, "Anthropology," 118–22.

19. These generalizations summarize an extensive review of descriptive literature and case studies, which cannot be documented here. For a fuller analysis with examples and references, see my forthcoming work.

20. Cf. I.M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971) 86–88, 96–97, 101.

21. While the menstrual taboo is culturally defined and regulated, it is so universal a factor of human culture that it may be viewed as a general social concept apart from its specific interpretation and institutionalization in the Israelite cultus.

22. The divorced woman and the widow alone are free of overriding male authority.

23. The consequences and implications of this conflict in ordering, or contrast in defining, the religious priorities for women are far-reaching. In a society in which cultic service is accorded highest value, women are disadvantaged when they are excepted from that obligation. The various attempts within the Old Testament to extend to women obligations and options that were originally formulated with males in mind leave unaddressed the tension between the requirement and the ability to fulfill it.

24. Old Babylonian *amat*-DN names, i.e., "handmaid of [divine name]," exceed *warad*-("servant-") names proportionally, even when the names of *nadîtu* women are excluded as cloister names. The data for these comparisons together with a full analysis of sexual distinction in naming are found in my unpublished study, "Sexual Distinction in Israelite Personal Names: A Socio-Religious Investigation."

25. The cultic assembly is not, I believe, to be understood as a male sect or society (though the early cultus has many of the features of a men's religious organization) but rather as a male-

constituted and directed institution at the center of Israelite society, representing the community as a whole and directing and controlling its life. The way in which it related to the larger community and the understanding of its own constitution seem to have changed over time in the direction of greater openness and inclusiveness, in respect not only to women but also to slaves, dependents, and resident aliens (cf. Deut 16:10–11, 13–14). See Conclusion.

26. Thus women shared many of the same rights and duties as men, made use of the same aid provided or mediated by the institutions, and, as men, were held accountable by them. Women, in common with men, prayed, consulted oracles, attended festivals and sought justice in the courts, received theophanies and divine commissions, sought oracular judgments and legal redress for wrongs suffered and received punishment for wrongs committed. It appears that they were not as a rule prohibited from general religious practices but rather were hindered from fuller participation by competing interest or duty (see below) or attracted by their own particular circumstances to make use of some means of religious expression more than others.

27. Miriam's historical role is impossible to reconstruct, but her ranking alongside Moses and Aaron suggests a position of considerable importance—and a cultic role. She is not identified by a husband but by her "brothers," the priest and the prophet. The roles of cultic singer and prophet are suggested.

28. The mythic and aetiological character of the narrative does not limit its value as evidence for a women's ritual.

29. The meaning of *nēbī'ā* in the latter case is disputed. It is clear, however, that the term in Isa 8:3 is used as a role designation ("the prophetess," not "my wife") whether or not it designates Isaiah's wife, and that it designates one who is to assist in the symbolic act that will complete Isaiah's sign.

30. The term used in Gen 38:21–22 is intended to describe a Canaanite practitioner in a Canaanite (and pre-Israelite) setting. Cf. n. 41, below.

31. Here opponents of Nehemiah. The Greek and Syriac apparently understood the name as masculine.

32. The narrowing of acceptable roles for women is correlated with a general narrowing of options in religious practice. The greater variety of roles and the fuller or more candid descriptions of practice in the premonarchic period in comparison with the later period raises the question whether the earlier practices disappeared or were simply reinterpreted (as heterodox) and/or suppressed. What is allowed to stand in the tradition of the earlier period was interpreted, in part at least, as evidence of the low moral state of the time—a judgment made explicit in the final editing of the Book of Judges (19:1, 30; etc.).

33. Use of the patriarchal traditions as sources for social reconstruction requires particular caution; they depict individuals or families with little attention to social context and treat them as representative or symbolic figures.

34. The one religious activity from which women appear to have been excluded by principle rather than circumstances was the offering of sacrifices, which eventually became the sole prerogative of the priest. The exclusion may ultimately be connected with the menstrual taboo, but it is not confined to periods of menstrual impurity. It appears, rather, to have been common practice elevated to a principle (cf. Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, 38–40) or to have been understood more in symbolic than in practical terms. Efforts to show that women offered sacrifices fail, I believe, in the case of biblical evidence. Presenting a sacrificial offering to the priest is not itself a sacrificial action (contra Peritz, "Women," 126–27) but an act of offering to which all are bound. In the case of the offering required for a woman's purification (Lev 12:6–7), a clear distinction is made between the woman's presentation of the animal to the priest ("she shall bring a lamb . . . to the priest," v 6) and the offering made *by* the priest *for* the woman ("and he shall offer it . . . and make atonement for her," v 7) (cf. Lev. 15:19–33). Nor is the sharing of a sacrificial meal an act of sacrifice, though

it is an important form of cultic participation, as Peritz insists (“Women in the Ancient Hebrew Cult,” 123–25). Manoah prepares and offers the sacrifice on behalf of his nameless wife to whom the angel has appeared (Judg 13:19), and Elkanah sacrifices (*wayyizbah*) at the shrine of Shiloh, distributing portions to his wives and children (1 Sam 1:4).

35. J. Renger’s study of the Old Babylonian “priesthood” based on the *lú* = *amēlu* list shows only one among the nineteen classes identified as *Kultpriester* in which men and women are identified by a common term, namely, the *en*, the highest ranked and earliest attested office in the list (“Untersuchungen zum Priestertum in der altbabylonischen Zeit” [ZA NF 24 (1967) 110–88] 113). The sex of the *en* appears to have been complementary to that of the deity, suggesting that the *en* was understood to represent the divine spouse. The rest of the classes are distinguished by gender and nomenclature and grouped (with the exception of the *entum*, the later Akkadian designation of the female *en*) in the typical hierarchical order of male-female, strongly suggesting sexual division of labor within the cultus rather than shared roles. Despite Renger’s use of the term *Priesterinnen* to describe the female classes, they do not appear to have performed activities that would properly be described as “priestly.” Use of the term “priestess” to describe such women is misleading, since it suggests comparable, if not identical, roles and equal status with priests.

The third group in the *lú* = *amēlu* list, exorcists, consists of five classes, all male—as we might expect, since these represent offices requiring technical skills and mastery of a body of esoteric knowledge, like the *baru* diviners in the second group. It is only in the second group, comprising the oracular speakers, that we find professional classes with both male and female members, namely, the *šā’iltum*/(*šā’ilum*), *maḥḥum*, *maḥḥūtum*, and *āpīlum*/*āpīlum*. The pattern presented in the Old Babylonian sources corresponds exactly to that which the more meager, and less specialized, Old Testament data suggest: priestly roles involving technical expertise and leadership in the sacrificial cult or other cultic ritual were male, as well as other roles demanding specialized knowledge, while the more charismatic forms of divination open to lay as well as professional practitioners involved women as well as men, just as their Old Testament prophetic counterpart. Cf. R. Harris: “Except for the religious functions of royal women and dream interpretation and divination, women played a minor role in cultic life. Only in the lower echelons of the ‘clergy’ did female singers, dancers, and musicians participate in the cult” (“Woman in the Ancient Near East,” *IDBSup*, 960–63 62).

Syrian and Canaanite sources are too meager to confirm a pattern. The Ugaritic texts contain no reference to any class of female cultic personnel as a recognizable group. Phoenician and Punic sources contain the only known ancient feminine form of *khn* (“priest”). In the Eshmunazar sarcophagus inscription (*KAI*, 14:15) it is applied to the queen of Sidon as royal patron, and hence chief official, of the city god Ashtart. I would interpret this as evidence of a royal cultus in which the king/queen, qua ruler, assumed the title and role of priest/presider in the official cultus, not as evidence for a class of female priests. The status and function of the women bearing this title in several Punic inscriptions (*KAI*, 70:1; 93:1; 145:45[?]; 140:2) cannot be determined. See now J.A. Hackett, *The Balaam Text from Deir ‘Allā* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984) 25.

36. While the women weavers expelled from the Temple by Josiah were associated with the service of a “foreign” deity or cult object, the Yahweh cultus also had need of such service. According to Exod 34:25–26, the material for the tabernacle hangings was spun by women. The weaving of the hangings, however, was supervised by the master craftsman Bezalel or his male assistant (Exod 34:35), an example of the male professionalization of female crafts observed in cross-cultural studies of gender roles. It is not certain who actually did the work; the *kol ḥākam-leb bē’ōšeh hammēlā’kāl* (“everyone able to do the work”) with its masculine plural verb could be a generic use of the masculine to describe a group of workers of mixed gender.

37. This is suggested on the analogy of work in the domestic sphere, though cultic specialization might well make cooking and baking male activities. Nevertheless it is worth speculating

who prepared the sacrificial victims for the communion meals eaten at the sanctuary and who baked the shewbread. In the report of the “priests’ custom with the people” in 1 Sam 2:13–17, it is clear that neither the priest nor the priest’s servant is involved in boiling the meat, since the priest’s servant takes or demands the portion desired by the priest. The man sacrificing is addressed in 1 Sam 2:15, but did he cook as well as slaughter the animal? Might not his accompanying wife have performed her usual work for the family feast? Or when the sacrifice later became a priestly prerogative, might not women of priestly families have performed this service?

Ezekiel’s provisions for the restored Temple include designation of areas for cooking and baking within the Temple complex, carefully separating the place where the priests were to boil the *ʾāšām* and the *ḥaṭṭāʾt* offerings and bake the *minḥā*—which was to be within the inner court (Ezek 46:20)—and the “kitchens” (*bē hammēbaššēlīm*) where “those who minister at the Temple” (*mēšārēṭē habbayit*) were to boil the “sacrifices of the people” (*zebah ḥā ʿam*)—which were located in the outer court (Ezek 46:21–24). This late scheme clearly assigns all actions related to the sanctuary to priests, guarding this sphere from that in which the preparation of meals for the people took place. Hearths are provided for the latter purpose and the activity was supervised by a lower class of Temple personnel (not priests). This stage of prescription for the cultus has professionalized actions earlier performed by the worshiper, including the slaughter of the sacrificial victims, which is now assigned to the Levites (Ezek 44:12; cf. Lev 2:4–7 and 3:1–17).

The mention of women as cooks and bakers in the palace service (1 Sam 8:13) may also provide a clue, at least for the earlier period, since the administration of the Temple was similar in many ways to the administration of the palace. A third type of female work mentioned in 1 Sam 8:13, that of “perfumers,” has a counterpart in the cultus in the preparation of the holy anointing oil, a special skill described by the use of the same verb (*raqqāḥōt*; *rōqēah*, Exod 30:25). However, the distinction in the use of the aromatic oils produced for the cultus may make this a male specialty in the cultic setting.

38. The suggestion is again by analogy to the almost universal assignment of housecleaning to women—or slaves. In large public buildings, palaces, etc., such work is usually done by slaves or low-caste groups, with tasks divided by sex, and that may have been the case in the Temple too. But at local shrines presided over by a single priest, the housekeeping chores of the deity’s house might well have fallen to the female members of the priest’s family.

39. Women are widely identified with singing and dancing as well as instrumental music-making in both biblical and extrabiblical texts and in pictorial representations (see, e.g., *ANEP*, 63–66, 111, 346; I. Seibert, *Woman in Ancient Near East* [Leipzig: Fortschritt Erfuhrt, 1974], pls. 10, 34, 99; O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World* [New York: Seabury/Crossroad, 1978] 336–39). None of these activities was restricted to women (cf. *ANEP*, 63–66, David’s reputation as a singer, and his dance before the Ark, 2 Sam 6:14, 16), though some types of instruments and performance may have been regarded as peculiarly or typically female. The “timbrel,” (*top*), e.g., appears to have been a preferred instrument of women (cf. Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, 33 n. 164; E. Werner, “Musical Instruments” [*IDB* 3. 469–76] 474); women musicians and dancers are widely attested as professional entertainers of men (cf. the Arabic *shayka*, the Japanese geisha, and the Old Testament image of the prostitute as a troubadour, singing to the tune of her harp [Isa 23:14–15]); and women typically formed a welcoming chorus line to greet warriors returning from battle (Exod 15:20; 1 Sam 18:6). The disputed question is whether women participated as musicians or dancers in cultic celebrations and whether they belonged to the personnel of the sanctuary.

The question is too complex for adequate treatment here. It may be that references to cultic dancing should be eliminated altogether, or at least those described by *māḥōl*/*mēḥōlā* and verbal forms of *ḥwl*, which appear always to designate actions of the congregation or groups of lay women, not a professional activity, and may refer to antiphonal singing rather than dance (see J.M.

Sasson, “The Worship of the Golden Calf,” *Orient and Occident: Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon*, AOAT 22 [1973] 151–59 157; cf. Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, 32–33). The function of the three daughters of Heman, mentioned in a parenthetical note in 1 Chron 25:5, is unclear, though the sons constituted a major Levitical guild of musicians in the Second Temple. The *mēšōrērīm ūmēšōrērōt* of Ezra 2:65 clearly represent a different class from the Temple singers described by the same term (masculine plural) in Ezra 2:41; Neh 7:44. Their place in the list following male and female servants and preceding the horses suggests a menial class of entertainers.

It seems likely that the public, professional roles of musicians in the Temple service were assigned to males, at least in the later period of the monarchy and the Second Temple period, while women’s specialized musical activity was limited to secular entertainment and funeral dirges (a “home” ritual). The earlier period, however, suggests a different picture in the attribution of two important songs of praise to women, both called prophets (Exod 15:20–21; Judg 4:4; 5:1; cf. 1 Chron 25:1, which describes the function of the Temple musicians as “prophesying” with lyres, harps, and cymbals). While the narrative contexts point to a traditional secular role of women in greeting returning warriors (cf. Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, 33), both texts may also be understood to describe cultic actions, whose setting is the celebration of Yahweh’s victories, not simply as one-time historical acts, but as repeated cultic actions recalling the great victories (or does the shift in attribution of the Song at the Sea from Miriam to Moses reflect a cultic institutionalization of the victory song in which the secular/lay role of the woman leader is transformed into a cultic/professional male role?). Psalm 68:26 suggests that in the Temple period at least women formed a recognized group among the Temple musicians *‘ālāmōt tōpēpōt*, mentioned between *šārīm* and *nōgēnīm* in the procession to the sanctuary; cf. Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, 34–35).

40. The many questions about these women cannot be explored adequately here, much less resolved. For the most recent discussion and review of literature, see Winter, *Frau und Göttin*, 58–65. Both the Samuel and the Exodus passages suggest the persistence of the office or institution after the initiation of the Yahwistic cultus and its tent shrine in the desert. Winter has seen rightly, I believe, that the significant information in the archaic Exodus tradition is the reference to the mirrors (*Frau und Göttin*, 60). For a critique of his interpretation, which views the mirror as the symbol of a female deity associated with fertility and the women as *Hofdamen* visiting the sanctuary, rather than cultic personnel, see my forthcoming work. Cf. J. Morgenstern, “The Ark, the Ephod, and the Tent,” *HUCA* 17 (1942–43) 153–265, *HUCA* 18 (1943–44) 1–52, for an interpretation of the women as shrine attendants based on pre-Islamic Arabic parallels.

41. This is not the place to review the evidence and arguments concerning the *qēdēšā*. The literature is far larger than that on the women at the entrance to the tent of meeting and the presence of cognates and of presumed parallel institutions in other ancient Near Eastern cultures requires a more thorough investigation and report than this piece permits. Of the three Old Testament references, two suggest a foreign origin or, at least, a non-Yahwistic institution (Deut 23:17 and Gen 38:21–22), while all three parallel the term with *zōnā* (“prostitute”). The cultic nature of the office or role is clear from the etymology and from the one text that describes an activity (Hos 4:14): “[The men] sacrifice with *qēdēšōt*.” Since the term is paired in Deut 23:17 with the masculine *qāḏēš*—in the reverse of the normal male-female order—any judgment about the *qēdēšā* must involve consideration of the whole class of cognate terms. In overview, it appears that the Old Testament usage is so generalized and polemical that it may serve more as a cover term for proscribed cultic roles rather than as the precise designation of a particular office or function. Since all of the masculine references (all apparently collective, except Deut 23:17, and therefore conceivably inclusive) are in Deuteronomistic contexts, the possibility must be considered that the term was used in Deuteronomistic circles to describe roles or offices, such as that of the *šōbēʾōt* of the Tent of Meeting, that were at one time considered a legitimate part of the Israelite cultus.

“And the Women Knead Dough”

The Worship of the Queen of Heaven in Sixth-Century Judah

SUSAN ACKERMAN

The typical historian of ancient Israelite religion, especially the historian of the first-millennium cult, relies heavily, if not exclusively, on the Bible. This is unavoidable, since the Bible is in essence the only written source (and indeed the only significant source of any kind) that describes the religion of first-millennium Israel and Judah. Yet it has become increasingly obvious to historians of Israelite religion that the Bible’s descriptions of the first-millennium cult are highly selective. The biblical materials, which come predominantly from the hands of priests and prophets, present priestly and prophetic religion as normative and orthodox in ancient Israel. Nonpriestly and nonprophetic religious beliefs and practices are condemned as heterodox and deviant. A more nuanced reconstruction of the religion of ancient Israel, however, would suggest that despite the biblical witness neither the priestly nor prophetic cult was normative in the religion of the first millennium. Rather, a diversity of beliefs and practices thrived and were accepted by the ancients as legitimate forms of religious expression.

Uncovering this diverse character of ancient Israelite religion requires a special methodology. First, we must train ourselves to supplement continually the biblical picture of Israelite religion by referring to other sources. Archaeological remains from Israel, especially iconographic and epigraphic materials, are crucial, as is comparative data from the ancient Near East and from elsewhere in the Mediterranean world. This evidence, however, often is sparse and not easily interpreted. Thus, more important methodologically is that we learn to treat our major source, the Bible, differently. We must examine the biblical presentations of the orthodox with an eye to the heterodox, seeking, for example, to look without prejudice at those cultic practices that the biblical writers so harshly condemn. Only when we acknowledge the polemical nature of many biblical texts can we see underlying their words evidence of the multifaceted nature of ancient Israelite religion.

It is this second methodological point in particular that helps illuminate an often overlooked aspect of ancient Israelite religion: women's religion. The all-male biblical writers treat this issue with silence or hostility; still, a careful reading of the biblical texts suggests that the women of Judah and Israel had a rich religious tradition.¹ The women of early sixth-century Judah, for example, devoted themselves to the worship of a goddess called the Queen of Heaven (Jer. 7:16–20; 44:15–19, 25). Indeed, although the prophet Jeremiah makes the women of Judah and Jerusalem the object of his special scorn due to their devotion to the Queen of Heaven (Jer. 44:25), the women are steadfast in their worship of the goddess: baking cakes “in her image” as offerings (Jer. 7:18; 44:19) and pouring out libations and burning incense to her (Jer. 44:15, 19). This devotion in the face of persecution indicates that the worship of the Queen of Heaven was an important part of women's religious expression in the sixth century. Here, by establishing the identity of the goddess called in the Bible the Queen of Heaven,² I propose to explore why the women of Judah found this goddess's cult so appealing.

Scholars, unfortunately, have reached no consensus on the identity of the Queen of Heaven. The great east Semitic goddess Ištar,³ Ištar's west Semitic counterpart, Astarte,⁴ the west Semitic goddess Anat,⁵ and even the Canaanite goddess Šapšu⁶ have been suggested. Other scholars maintain that it is impossible, given the available data, to determine to which of the Semitic goddesses the Queen of Heaven corresponds.⁷ Finally, there are some who believe that the Queen of Heaven is not one deity, but rather a syncretistic goddess who combines the characteristics of east Semitic Ištar and west Semitic Astarte.⁸

My own sympathies lie with this latter position, which sees in the Queen of Heaven characteristics of both west Semitic Astarte and east Semitic Ištar. The Queen of Heaven as described in the Bible certainly shares with Astarte many features, first, the title of Queen or some related epithet. In texts from the Egyptian New Kingdom (1570–1085 B.C.E.) Astarte is called “Lady of Heaven.”⁹ More notably, in the first millennium Astarte bears the title Queen. On the obverse face of the Kition tariff inscription, which lists the monthly expenditures for the temple of Astarte at Kition, Astarte is referred to as “the holy Queen” and “the Queen.”¹⁰ The Phoenician hierophant Sakkunyaton also refers to Astarte's queenly role in first-millennium religion. He describes her as the co-regent of King Zeus Demarous (Canaanite Baʿl Haddu) and remarks that she wears on her head a bull's head as an emblem of “kingship” (*basileias*).¹¹

The biblical Queen of Heaven also shares with Astarte an association with the heavens. Astarte's astral features, already indicated in the second millennium by the Egyptian title “Lady of Heaven,” are numerous in first-millennium religion. In both the Eshmunazar and the Bodashtart inscriptions from Phoenicia Astarte's sacred precinct in Sidon is called “the highest heavens.”¹² Elsewhere in the Mediterranean world Astarte's association with the heavens is suggested by her identification with Greek Aphrodite, the goddess of Venus, the Morning and Evening Star. This identification of Astarte with Aphrodite is made clear by Sakkunyaton, who writes, “the Phoenicians say that Astarte is Aphrodite,”¹³ and also by a fourth-century Greek/Phoenician bilingual that translates the Phoenician name “Abdʿaštart the Ashkelonite” as “Aphrodisios the Ashkelonite.”¹⁴ Notably, moreover, the Astarte or Aphrodite worshiped by Abdʿaštart and other Ashkelonites was Aphrodite of the Heavens (*Aphroditē ourania*); Herodotus (1.105)¹⁵ and Pausanias (1.14.7) remark on the cult of Aphrodite of the Heavens in Ashkelon. This

correspondence of Astarte with Greek Aphrodite of the Heavens is confirmed by a second-century inscription from Delos dedicated to "Palestinian Astarte, that is, Aphrodite of the Heavens."¹⁶

Another datum showing Astarte's association with the heavens comes from Pyrgi, a site on the west coast of Italy about thirty miles west-northwest of Rome. The bilingual inscription found at Pyrgi is dedicated in its Phoenician version to Astarte and in its Etruscan form to the goddess Uni. J. Fitzmyer notes that Etruscan Uni is Roman Juno, and, significantly, that Uni is "closely associated" with "Juno of the Heavens" (*Juno caelestis*) in Roman Africa.¹⁷ More evidence, later in date, comes from Herodian, who reports that the Phoenicians call Aphrodite of the Heavens (= Astarte) "Queen of the Stars" (*astroarchē*).¹⁸ Moreover, Apuleius calls Caelestis Venus of Paphos "Queen of Heaven" (*regina caeli*).¹⁹ Latin *Caelestis Venus* is a simple translation of Greek *Aphroditē ourania*, Aphrodite of the Heavens, whom we have identified with Palestinian Astarte.

In addition to the fact that Astarte in her epithets can be associated with the heavens, it is important to note that Astarte has other astral aspects.²⁰ In her iconography Astarte is symbolized by a star. Like Greek Aphrodite and Ištar, her Mesopotamian counterpart, Astarte is identified with Venus, the Morning and Evening Star. Sakkunyatón also remarks on Astarte's astral features: "When traveling around the world, she [Astarte] discovered a star which had fallen from the sky. She took it and consecrated it in Tyre, the holy island."²¹

A third characteristic Astarte shares with the biblical Queen of Heaven is her close association with fertility. The fertility aspects of the Queen of Heaven are made clear in Jer. 44:17, where the people of Judah claim that when they worshiped the Queen of Heaven, "we had plenty of food and we prospered." Conversely, "since we stopped worshipping the Queen of Heaven and stopped pouring out libations to her, we have lacked everything and been consumed . . . by famine" (44:18). At the same time, the Queen of Heaven seems to have a secondary association with war: according to her followers as quoted in Jeremiah, her proper worship guaranteed that the people "saw no evil" (44:17), but when her cult was abandoned, "we were consumed by the sword" (44:18). Astarte, too, has in addition to attributes of fertility associations with war.

The most striking evidence for Astarte's role as a guarantor of fertility is found in the Hebrew Bible, where the noun *'aštārôt*, a form of the divine name Astarte (*'aštart*), means "increase, progeny." Astarte's association with fertility is also demonstrated by her characterization as a goddess of sexual love at Ugarit, the thriving Levantine metropolis of the late second millennium. There Astarte plays the role of divine courtesan. This is particularly clear in one text, where El, the high god of the Ugaritic pantheon, sits enthroned at a royal banquet, flanked by Astarte, his lover, and Baʿl Haddu, his regent.²² This depiction of Astarte as a goddess of sexual love continues into the mid- to late first millennium, as her identification with Greek Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love, indicates. It is also known from Egypt, where Astarte, along with the goddess Anat, is called one of "the great goddesses who conceive but do not bear."²³

Astarte's associations with war are in general not as well known as her character as a fertility goddess. An Egyptian New Kingdom stele of Merneptah from Memphis depicts the goddess with shield and spear,²⁴ and other Egyptian representations of Astarte show her on horseback carrying weapons of war.²⁵ Pharaoh Thutmose IV (Eighteenth Dynasty) is described as being mighty in the chariot like Astarte.²⁶ Along with Anat, Astarte

is called a shield to Pharaoh Ramesses III²⁷ and a part of a thirteenth-century king's war chariot.²⁸ In the second millennium she carries the epithet "Lady of Combat";²⁹ similarly an Egyptian text from the Ptolemaic period (late first millennium) describes her as "Astarte, Mistress of Horses, Lady of the Chariot."³⁰ In the Canaanite realm Astarte acts as a war goddess in concert with Horon in Ugaritic mythology.³¹ In biblical tradition the armor of the dead Saul is taken by the Philistines to the temple of Astarte (1 Sam. 31:10), which may also indicate the goddess's associations with war.

A fourth reason for identifying Astarte with the biblical Queen of Heaven is that the cult of Astarte has as a crucial element the offering of cakes, a ritual that also plays an important role in the worship of the Queen of Heaven (Jer. 7:18; 44:19). The Kition Tariff inscription mentioned above is again noteworthy, for line 10 of that inscription mentions "the two bakers who baked the basket of cakes for the Queen";³² the Queen, I have argued, must be Astarte.³³ In addition, W. Culican has drawn attention to a Hellenistic votive model found off the Phoenician coast.³⁴ The model shows six figures positioned around a domed object. Culican identifies four identical seated females as votaresses. Another female figure stands and is pregnant; Culican believes her to be the fertility goddess, Astarte. This identification cannot be certain, but Astarte's well-attested popularity in the Phoenician and Punic realm in the late first millennium (see below), coupled with her known fertility attributes, make Culican's hypothesis attractive. Culican identifies the sixth figure on the model, a male, as a priest of the goddess. The domed object around which the six figures cluster is interpreted as a beehive oven. Culican proposes the scene is a cake-baking ritual in honor of Astarte. This is a speculative, but, in light of the Kition Tariff inscription and Jer. 7:18 and 44:19, an appealing suggestion.

A fifth and final factor that suggests that the biblical Queen of Heaven is Astarte is the popularity of the goddess Astarte in the west Semitic cult of the first millennium. Hundreds of Phoenician and Punic personal names incorporate the divine element *ʿšrt*, Astarte.³⁵ The goddess's name also appears in many Phoenician and Punic inscriptions, both from the Phoenician mainland and from the Mediterranean world and North Africa. The inscription of Paalaštart from Memphis (KAI 48), in addition to other first-millennium Egyptian material cited above, attests to the popularity of Astarte in Egypt. In Israel the Deuteronomistic historians accuse the people of worshiping Astarte in Judg. 2:13; 10:6; 1 Sam. 7:4; 12:10; 1 Kgs. 11:5, 33; and 2 Kgs. 23:13.³⁶ Also in Sakkunyaton Astarte is an important goddess, a wife of Kronos³⁷ and, as we have noted, a co-regent with Zeus Demarous/Baʿl Haddu.³⁸ Astarte is thus a worthy candidate for the Queen of Heaven.

But certain elements of the worship of the Queen of Heaven remain unexplained if we interpret the cult of the Queen of Heaven only as a cult of west Semitic Astarte. For example, the word used in Jer. 7:18 and 44:19 for the cakes baked for the Queen, *kawwānīm*, is used nowhere in the extrabiblical materials that pertain to Astarte. Similarly, the biblical reference to baking cakes "in her image" (Jer. 44:19) cannot be understood by reference to the worship of west Semitic Astarte. Third, west Semitic evidence attests to no special role for women in the cult of Astarte. However, as we will see, these elements in the cult of the Queen of Heaven can be explained if we examine the cult of the east Semitic goddess, Ištar.

Certainly Ištar is a goddess who appropriately bears the title "Queen of Heaven." Indeed, the ancient Sumerian name of Ištar, Inanna, was thought by the subsequent inhabitants of Mesopotamia, the Akkadians, to mean "Queen of Heaven" (reading [N]IN.AN.NA[K]), and thus the name Inanna is routinely rendered in Akkadian texts as "Queen of Heaven" (*šarrat šamē*) or "Lady of Heaven" (*bēlet šamē*).³⁹ Ištar is also called by related epithets: "Queen of Heaven and the Stars," "Queen of Heaven and Earth," "Lady of Heaven and Earth," "Sovereign of Heaven and Earth," and "Ruler of Heaven and Earth."⁴⁰ In the West, too, Ištar is known as "Lady of Heaven." In an Egyptian New Kingdom inscription from Memphis Ištar of Nineveh (called by the ancient scribe Hurrian Astarte⁴¹) is given this title.⁴² Ištar has other astral features in addition to her epithets.⁴³ In Mesopotamia, for example, Ištar is equated with Sumerian *DIL.BAT*, the Sumerian name of the planet Venus.

Also Ištar is a fertility goddess, as the Mesopotamian stories of Dumuzi/Tammuz and Inanna/Ištar show. These stories tell of the young fertility god, Tammuz, a symbol of prosperity and yield, and his courting and wooing of the maiden Ištar, who represents the communal storehouse in which harvested foodstuffs were kept. Tammuz is successful in his courtship, and the young fertility god and goddess marry. With their sexual union they guarantee fruitfulness in the land and bounty in the storehouse. This is symbolized in the myth by the fact that Tammuz, as his wedding gift to Ištar, brings to Ištar produce to be placed in her storehouse.⁴⁴ The identification of Ištar with the grain storehouse in these myths and elsewhere demonstrates her role in guaranteeing continual prosperity and preventing famine, an attribute associated with the Queen of Heaven in Jer. 44:17–18.

Ištar also has associations with war. In the Epilogue to the Code of Hammurapi, Hammurapi calls Ištar "the lady of the battle and of the fight" (Col. 50 [Rs. 27], 92–93). Her powers on the battlefield are clearly indicated by the curse she is to inflict on Hammurapi's enemy (Col. 51 [Rs. 28], 2–23):

May she shatter his weapon at the battle site. May she establish for him confusion (and) rioting. May she cause his warriors to fail. May she give the earth their blood to drink. May she pile up everywhere on the plain heaps of corpses from his army. May she not take pity. As for him, may she give him into the hands of his enemies. May she lead him, bound, to the land of his enemies!

The myth of Inanna and Ebeh, in which Inanna/Ištar assaults the mountain Ebeh, also attests to Ištar's warring nature.⁴⁵

Lexicographers generally agree that *kawwānīm*, the word used for the cakes baked for the Queen of Heaven in Jer. 7:18 and 44:19, is a loan word from Akkadian *kamānu*, "cake."⁴⁶ In Akkadian texts *kamānu* cakes are often associated with the cult of Ištar. A hymn to Ištar reads as follows:

O Ištar, merciful goddess, I have come to visit you,
I have prepared for you an offering, pure milk, a pure cake baked in ashes
(*kamān tumri*),
I stood up for you a vessel for libations, hear me and act favorably toward me!⁴⁷

Another text describes a healing ritual associated with the Ištar cult, in which a cake baked in ashes (*kamān tumri*) is prepared in honor of the goddess.⁴⁸ Finally in the Gilgamesh

epic, Gilgamesh describes how Tammuz brought ash cakes (*tumru*) to his lover Ištar (Gilg. 6.58–60). Although *kamānu* cakes are not specifically mentioned in the Gilgamesh passage, most commentators assume that the reference to *tumru* is a shorthand expression for the *kamān tumri*, “cake baked in ashes,” the cake associated with the Ištar cult in our first two examples.⁴⁹

Scholars who have commented on the biblical cult of the Queen of Heaven are generally puzzled by the phrase “cakes in her image” (*lēha‘āšībāh*).⁵⁰ Those holding that the Queen of Heaven is Ištar often explain what “in her image” means by pointing to several clay molds found at Mari, a site in northwest Mesopotamia. These molds portray a nude female figure who holds her hands cupped under her breasts. Her hips are large and prominent.⁵¹ It has been suggested that the molds represent Ištar, and that they were used to shape cakes baked in the image of the goddess. These cakes were then offered to Ištar as part of her sacrificial cult.⁵² Although there are problems with this suggestion,⁵³ the proposal to relate the Mari molds to biblical *lēha‘āšībāh* is intriguing.

Finally, we observe that women seem to have a special place in the Ištar cult. In Mesopotamian mythology, as we have noted, the largest complex of stories about Ištar deals with her courtship and marriage to the young fertility god Tammuz. Tammuz symbolizes in the myths the spring season of prosperity and yield, a season when dates and grain were harvested, calves and lambs were born, and milk ran during the spring milking season. But when the spring harvest season ended, the mythology perceived that the god Tammuz had died.⁵⁴ The death of Tammuz was an occasion of sorrow for his young bride, Ištar, and Akkadian mythology preserves many of her laments over her dead lover.⁵⁵ And as a woman, Ištar, laments the death of her lover in myth, it is women, devotees of Ištar, who lament Tammuz’s passing in the rituals of the Mesopotamian Tammuz cult.⁵⁶ The place of women in the Mesopotamian Tammuz cult is vividly illustrated by Ezek. 8:14, where it is women who are specifically identified as those who sit at the gate of the Jerusalem temple’s inner court mourning the death of the fertility god. I suggest that it is this special place of women in the cult of Tammuz that is reflected in the biblical materials about the Queen of Heaven.

At first glance, it may seem a long jump from the role of women in the mourning rites of the Tammuz cult to the role of women in baking cakes for the Queen of Heaven. But, in fact, the two are closely related. The *kamānu* cakes associated with the Ištar cult (the *kawwānīm* baked as offerings to the Queen of Heaven) are a staple food of Mesopotamian shepherds.⁵⁷ Tammuz is the prototypical and patron shepherd of Mesopotamia. Moreover, as we noted above, in the Gilgamesh epic Gilgamesh describes Tammuz as the one who heaps up ash cakes for his lover Ištar (Gilg. 6.58–60). The cult of Tammuz the shepherd is closely tied to the Ištar cult that involves the baking of offering cakes. The cultic participants who mourn the death of Tammuz are thus the worshipers who bake cakes for Ištar, the Queen of Heaven. And, as women play a crucial role in the ritual mourning over Tammuz, they also play an important role in the cult involving the baking of *kamānu* cakes.

I submit that the Queen of Heaven is a syncretistic deity whose character incorporates aspects of west Semitic Astarte and east Semitic Ištar. This syncretism probably occurred early in Canaanite religious history, well before the sixth century. Certainly the people of Judah, in Jer. 44:17, and Jeremiah himself, in Jer. 44:21, describe the cult as one

practiced by past generations. Moreover, we know that the cult of Ištar of Nineveh is attested in Egypt during the New Kingdom⁵⁸ and as far west as Spain by the eighth century B.C.E.⁵⁹ This would suggest that the cults of Astarte and Ištar were exposed to each other and began intermingling sometime during the last centuries of the second millennium. This syncretism then continued throughout the Iron Age. Indeed, the cult of the Queen of Heaven in the Iron Age prospered, attracting in particular the women of sixth-century Judah and Jerusalem.

But surprisingly, this women’s cult did not prosper only in those spheres such as the home and the family where we might expect to find women’s religion. To be sure, there is a strong domestic component to the cult, seen especially in Jer. 7:18, where “the children gather wood, the fathers kindle fire, and the women knead dough to make cakes for the Queen of Heaven.” But if Jer. 44:17 and 21 are to be taken at all seriously, then the “kings and princes” of Judah are also among those who worshiped the Queen. And, if the worship of the Queen of Heaven was a part of the religion of the monarchy, the Queen’s cult may also have been at home in what was essentially the monarch’s private chapel, the temple. This is certainly suggested by Ezek. 8:14, where the women who participate in the related cult of wailing over the Queen’s deceased lover, Tammuz, sit at the north gates of the temple’s inner court. The presence of a temple dedicated to the Queen of Heaven in fifth-century Egypt, a century after Jeremiah, in Jeremiah 44, berates the Judahites who have fled to Egypt for worshiping the Queen of Heaven, is also suggestive.

J.A. Hackett has argued that women in ancient Israelite society had a higher status and more opportunities to hold public and powerful positions in times of social dysfunction.⁶⁰ Certainly the calamitous years of the late seventh and early sixth centuries, which witnessed the senseless death of King Josiah, the David *revivodus*, in 609, the Babylonian exiles of 597 and 587, the final destruction of the temple by the Babylonians in 587, and the simultaneous end of Judahite political independence, qualify as a period of severe dysfunction. There is, admittedly, little evidence from this period for women wielding political power. But the biblical data about the Queen of Heaven do suggest that the women of late seventh- and early sixth-century Judah and Jerusalem exercised religious power.⁶¹ They worshiped a goddess whose cult they found particularly appealing and went so far as to introduce the cult of that goddess into the temple compound itself.

Since it is winners who write history, the importance of this women’s cult in the history of the religion of Israel has been obscured by our sources. The ultimate “winners” in the religion of early sixth-century Judah, the Deuteronomistic historians, the priest-prophet Ezekiel, and the prophet Jeremiah, were men. The biblical texts these men wrote malign non-Deuteronomistic, non-priestly, and non-prophetic religion, and in the case of the cult of the Queen of Heaven they malign the religion of women. But fortunately for us, the sources have not completely ignored some women’s cults. The losers have not been totally lost. If historians of Israelite religion continue to push beyond biblical polemic, we should hear more and more the voices of the women of Israel witnessing to their religious convictions.

NOTES

1. See P. Bird's recent article ("The Place of Women in the Israelite Cultus," in *Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross*, eds., P.D. Miller Jr., P.D. Hanson, S.D. McBride [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987], 397–419) for a good introduction to this subject.

2. The consonantal Hebrew text reads *lmlkt*, "to the Queen of" (Jer. 7:18; 44:17,18, 19,25). But the MT vocalizes *limleket*, as if the word were *lml^lkt*, "to the work of [heaven]," i.e., "to the heavenly host." Indeed, many Hebrew manuscripts read *lml^lkt* (with an ^{alep}), which is supported by the Targum and Peshitta and, apparently, by the G in Jer. 7:18 (*tē stratja*). But as is commonly recognized, the Masoretic pointing is an apologetic attempt to remove any hint that the people of Judah worshiped the Queen of Heaven. See R.P. Gordon, "Aleph Apologeticum," *JQR* 69 (1978–79): 112. The correct reading is *lēmalkat*, "to the Queen of," supported by Symmachus, Theodotian, Aquila, the Vg, and the G of Jer. 44:17,18,19,25.

3. J. Bright, *Jeremiah*, AB 21 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 56; M. Held, "Studies in Biblical Lexicography in the Light of Akkadian," *Eretz Israel* 16 (1982): 76–77 (Hebrew); M.H. Pope, *Song of Songs*, AB 7c (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 149 (but see n. 4); W.E. Rast, "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven," in *Scripture in History and Theology: Studies in Honor of J. Coert Rylaarsdam*, eds., A.L. Merrill and T.W. Overholt, PTMS 17 (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1977), 167–80; W. Rudolph, *Jeremiah*, 3d ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1968), 55; M. Weinfeld, "The Worship of Molech and the Queen of Heaven and its Background," *UF* 4 (1972): 148–54; A. Weiser, *Das Buch des Propheten Jeremia*, ATD 20, 21 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1952), 70.

4. E. Bresciani and M. Kamil, *Le lettere aramaiche di Hermopoli*, Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei 8/12 (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1966), 400; R. du Mesnil du Buisson, *Etudes sur les dieux phéniciens hérités par l'Empire Romain* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 126–27; W. Culican, "A Votive Model from the Sea," *PEQ* 108 (1976): 121–22; J. Fitzmyer, "The Phoenician Inscription from Pyrgi," *JAOS* 86 (1966): 287–88; W. Herrmann, "Astart," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 15 (1969): 29, n. 67; W.L. Holladay, *Jeremiah I*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 254–55; M.H. Pope, "Attart, 'Astart, Astarte," in M.H. Pope and W. Röllig, "Syrien. Die Mythologie der Ugariter und Phonizer," *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, vol. 1: *Götter und Mythen im vorderen Orient* (ed. H.W. Haussig; Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1965), 251 (but see n. 3); M.H. Silverman, *Religious Values in the Jewish Proper Names at Elephantine*, AOAT 217 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985), 225, n. 6. In a newly published article, which appeared after I had completed my essay, S.M. Olyan also identifies the Queen as Astarte ("Some Observations Concerning the Identity of the Queen of Heaven," *UF* 19 [1987]: 161–74).

5. W.F. Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan; A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1968), 130; M. Cogan, *Imperialism and Religion: Assyria, Judah and Israel in the Eighth and Seventh Centuries B.C.E.*, SBLMS 19 (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1974), 85; A.S. Kapelrud, *The Violent Goddess; Anat in the Ras Shamra Texts* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), 13, 16; J. McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians, 739–609 B.C.*, SBT (Second Series) 26 (Naperville, Ill.: A.R. Allenson, 1973), 110–11, n. 19; B. Porten, *Archives from Elephantine; The Life of an Ancient Jewish Military Colony* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1968), 165, 177; A. Vincent, *La religion des Judéo-Araméens d'Elephantine* (Paris: Geuthner, 1937), 635, 649–51.

6. M. Dahood, "La Regina del Cielo in Geremia," *RivB* 8 (1960): 166–68.

7. For example, J. Gray, "Queen of Heaven," *IDB* 3, 975a, b.

8. Note the comments of Fitzmyer, "Pyrgi," *JAOS* 86 (1966): 287, of Rast, "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven," *Scripture in History and Theology*, 170; and cf. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 56. M.H.

Pope may also indirectly indicate his support of such a thesis, since he identifies the Queen of Heaven as Astarte in *Wörterbuch der Mythologie*, 251 (n. 4), but as Ištar in Song, 149 (n. 3).

9. Egyptian *nbt pt*. D.B. Redford ("New Light on the Asiatic Campaigning of Horemheb," *BASOR* 211 [1973]: 37) finds this epithet on a stone bowl of the Eighteenth Dynasty; the bowl is also discussed by M. Delcor ("La culte de la 'Reine du Ciel' selon Jer. 7, 18; 44, 17–19, 25 et ses survivances," *Von Kanaan bis Kerala*, AOAT 211 [Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982], 114). For Nineteenth Dynasty inscriptions, see W.M.F. Petrie, *Memphis* 1 (London: School of Archaeology in Egypt and Bernard Quaritch, 1909), 19, and M.G. Maspero, "Notes de Voyage," *Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 10 (1909): 131–32; Also Delcor, "La culte de la 'Reine du Ciel,'" *Von Kanaan bis Kerala*, 114; W. Helck, *Die Beziehungen Ägyptens zu Vorderasien im 3. und 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.*, Ägyptologische Abhandlungen 5, 2d ed. (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1971), 457–58; J. Leclant, "Astarté à cheval d'après les représentations égyptiennes," *Syria* 37 (1960): 10–13, and Fig. 1; R. Stadelmann, *Syrisch-Palästinensische Gottheiten in Ägypten*, Probleme der Ägyptologie 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 104, 106.

10. See *CIS* 86 A; *KAI* 37 A, *mlkt qdšt* (line 7) and *mlkt* (line 10). (I am following the line numbers of *KAI* and most commentators; see further J.B. Peckham, "Notes on a Fifth-Century Phoenician Inscription from Kition, Cyprus (*CIS* 86)," *Or* 37 [1968]: 304, n. 2.) Note that although Astarte is not mentioned by name in lines 7 and 10, the title "queen" in an inscription concerned with the cult and temple of Astarte can refer to no other. This is acknowledged by almost all commentators. See as representative J.C.L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* 3 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 128, J.P. Healey, "The Kition Tariffs and the Phoenician Cursive Series," *BASOR* 216 (1974): 55; O. Masson and M. Sznycer, *Recherches sur les phéniciens à Chypre*, Hautes Etudes Orientales 2/3 (Genève et Paris: Librairie Droz, 1972), 44; Peckham, "Kition," *Or* 37 (1968): 312–13. The suggestion of H. Donner and W. Röllig (*KAI* 2, 55) that *mlkt* is a mistake for *ml'kt*, "service," in line 7 (they do not comment on line 10) is surely not correct, as the scribe demonstrates in line 13 that he knows the proper spelling of *ml'kt*, that is, with an *'alep* (see Masson and Sznycer, *Recherches*, 44).

11. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 1.10.31. Also in connection with Astarte's royalty note the Tyrian "Throne of Astarte" (*KAI* 17) and the uninscribed "thrones" like it. See J.T. Milik, "Les papyrus araméens d'Hermoupolis et les cultes syro-phéniciens en Egypte perse," *Bib* 48 (1967): 572, and the bibliography listed there.

12. *šmm 'dr̄m* in *KAI* 14 (Eshmunazor), 16 and 17; *šmm rmm* in *KAI* 15 (Bodashtart). On *KAI* 14 see further Gibson, *Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* 3, 112; Milik, "Les papyrus araméens," *Bib* 48 (1967): 561 and n. 2 on that page; J. Teixidor, *The Pagan God; Popular Religion in the Greco-Roman Near East* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1977), 39. On *KAI* 15 see F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic; Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1973), 142; Gibson, *Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* 3, 112; Milik, "Les papyrus araméens," *Bib* 48 (1967): 597–98; and, especially, O. Eissfeldt, "Schamemrumim 'Hoher Himmel,' ein Stadtteil von Gross-Sidon," *Ras Shamra und Sanchuniaton* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1939), 62–67 (No. 14).

13. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 1.10.32; translation, H.W. Attridge and R.A. Oden, *Philo of Byblos, The Phoenician History; Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, and Notes*, CBQMS 9 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981), 55.

14. *KAI* 54. Phoenician *bd'str̄t 'šqlny*; Greek *Aphrodisiou Askalōnitēs*.

15. Note also 1.131 and 3.8.

16. *Astartē palaistinē*, *Aphroditē ouraniā*. See P. Roussel and M. Launey, *Inscriptions de Délos* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1937), #2305 (*editio princeps*: M. Clermont-Ganneau, "Une dédicace à 'Astarte Palestinienne,' découverte à Délos," *CRAIBL* [1909]: 307–17). Also see

Delos inscription #1719 in Roussel and Launey (*editio princeps*: A. Plassart, *Délos* 11 [Paris: E. de Boccard, 1928], 287), and the discussions of Delcor, “La culte de la ‘Reine du Ciel,’” *Von Kanaan bis Kerala*, 117; R.A.S. Macalister, *The Philistines, their History and Civilization* (London: Oxford University, 1914), 94; McKay, *Religion in Judah*, 51.

17. Fitzmyer, “Pyrgi,” *JAOS* 86 (1966): 288. The identification of Astarte with Juno, rather than with Etruscan *Turan*, Roman Venus, the usual equivalent of Greek Aphrodite, need not give pause, given the tremendous fluidity of the great Canaanite goddesses in the first millennium.

18. 5.6.4; pointed out by Delcor, “La culte de la ‘Reine du Ciel,’” *Von Kanaan bis Kerala*, 115.

19. *Metamorphoses* 11.2; pointed out by Teixidor, *The Pagan God*, 36. *RES* 921, which reads [𐤔]trt pp[s], confirms that the cult of Palestinian Astarte was known at Paphos. See A. Dupont-Sommer, “Les Phéniciens à Chypre,” *Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, 1974* (Nicosia: Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, and Zavallis Press, 1974), 93–94.

20. In addition to the data cited below, see J.J.M. Roberts, *The Earliest Semitic Pantheon* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 1972) 101, n. 285.

21. Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 1.10.31, trans., Attridge and Oden, *Philo of Byblos*, 55.

22. *Ugaritica* 5.2 (RS 24.252); see also *CTA* 14.3.146.

23. From the Papyrus Harris; see W.F. Albright, “The North Canaanite Epic of ʾAlpeyān Baʿal and Môt,” *JPOS* 12 (1932): 193, W.F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1942), 75; Helck *Beziehungen*, 462; Leclant, “Astarté à cheval,” *Syria* 37 (1960): 7; J.B. Pritchard, *Palestinian Figurines in Relation to Certain Goddesses Known throughout Literature*, *AOS* 24 (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1943), 79. Also from Egypt, note the plaque of the composite goddess, Qudšu-Astarte-Anat, where the goddess holds a lotus and serpent, symbols of fertility (I.E.S. Edwards, “A Relief of Qudshu-Astarte-Anath in the Winchester College Collection,” *JNES* 14 [1955]: 49–51).

24. Petrie, *Memphis* 1, 8, and Pl. 15, No. 37. See also Leclant, “Astarté à cheval,” *Syria* 37 (1960): 10–13, and Fig. 1.

25. Leclant, “Astarté à cheval,” *Syria* 37 (1960), *passim*. See also the “Lady Godiva” plaque found in D. Ussishkin’s excavations at Lachish, which shows a goddess, Astarte, I would argue, standing astride a horse. See. D. Ussishkin, “Excavations at Tel Lachish—1973–1977. Preliminary Report,” *Tel Aviv* 5 (1978): 21, and Pl. 8.

26. H. Carter and P.E. Newberry, *The Tomb of Thoutmosis IV*, Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire 15 (Westminster: Archibald Constable and Co., 1904), 27 and Pl. 10; also *ANET*, 250a and n. 16.

27. W.F. Edgerton and J.A. Wilson, *Historical Records of Ramesses III*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 12 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1936), 75, also *ANET*, 250a and n. 18.

28. W.R. Dawson and T.E. Peet, “The So-Called Poem on the King’s Chariot,” *JEA* 19 (1933): 169 (verso, lines 12–14); also *ANET*, 250a and n. 17.

29. Leclant, “Astarté à cheval,” *Syria* 37 (1960): 25.

30. Leclant, “Astarté à cheval,” *Syria* 37 (1960): 54–58, especially p. 57, and Pl. 4 (opposite p. 49); *ANET*, 250a, n. 16.

31. *CTA* 2.1.7–8; 16.6.54–57. W. Herrmann has pointed out that the obverse of *PRU* 5.1 (19.39) also describes Astarte as a war goddess (Herrmann, “Astart,” *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung* 15 [1969]: 7–16).

32. For the reading (*Ppm* || 𐤔𐤓𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤏𐤕𐤕) and translation adopted here, see Peckham, “Kition,” *Or* 37 (1968): 305–6. Peckham is followed by Gibson, *Syrian Semitic Inscriptions* 3, 124–25, and by Masson and Sznycer, *Recherches*, 26–27, 28–29. Healey (“Kition,” *BASOR* 216 [1974]: 54) offers an alternative reconstruction, *Ppm* || 𐤔𐤓𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤏𐤕𐤕 𐤕𐤏𐤕𐤕, “For the two bakers, who baked choice food, loaves for the Queen.”