

# **When God Was a Woman Study Guide**

## **When God Was a Woman by Merlin Stone**

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# Plot Summary

In *When God Was a Woman*, Merlin Stone provides abundant information about early female religions that can make up for the disinformation and censorship that retard the liberation of women today.

Creation myths from across the ancient show that Genesis is one attempt at explaining human existence rather than a prescription for stereotyping and oppressing women. The Great Goddess has been worshiped under many titles since at least Neolithic times (7000 BCE) as a singular entity, precisely like God is today. She invents agriculture and writing, heals, and gives laws that provide women full rights. Women control Her rituals, which often include annual lamentations for a young lover/consort who dies. Priestesses are Her incarnation, and sex with them is a means of communion. This changes as "battle ax cultures" invade (2400 BCE) and transfer dominance to males. Everywhere, women slip in status from clergy to musicians, and the Goddess devolves into the "Great Wife" of her former consort. The new male deities are storm gods, blazing on mountains in fire or lightning. In Palestine, this occurs as Yahwehism develops, through Abraham (1800-1700 BCE), Moses (1300-1250 BCE), and the Levite priests who write it down (1000-600 BCE). In many myths, the female deity becomes a serpent/dragon, associated with darkness/evil. Dualism is prevalent in the Indo-European belief system.

Hebrew women are, unlike anywhere else, stripped of rights in this patriarchal society. The Canaanites are dispossessed for committing sexual abominations, which are but continuations of what has been licit and holy for millennia. The Levites invent a new morality that demands virginity until marriage for all women and fidelity of wives to husbands—both on threat of death. Clear paternity is needed to suppress matrilineal social patterns characteristic of Goddess worship. Yahweh commands his armies to destroy the existing religion and occupy the territory through bloody sieges. Many women enter the Hebrew tribes traumatized by what they have seen and remember childhood religions in which women are not maltreated. Prophets continually threaten destruction for forsaking Yahweh and worshiping Ashtoreth/Baal, and the Levites order whole towns massacred to end assimilation to surrounding culture. Despite centuries of suppression and persecution, Goddess religion continues.

In antiquity, sacred serpents are instruments of divine revelation and, like fig trees, are associated with sexual pleasure and reproduction. The Levites use these common images to attack the tenets of Goddess religion, disregarding all the elements of how She creates humans in pairs. The Levites create Adam first and make Eve serve his pleasure. They have the fruit make them aware of their sexuality, but make it a shameful thing to them. They undercut the ancient oracular tradition, allowing women to be transformed from wise counselors into silent and ignored beings. Christianity embraces the theme wholeheartedly.

Only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries do women begin to speak out courageously against this injustice, and the church fights to protect male supremacy even in matters of voting. Non-believers should be concerned over the church's

continuing influence and power in thwarting women's liberation. Many values are so ingrained as to be almost instinctive, but knowing about early female religions helps fight ignorance, which is inculcated by censorship, disinformation, and pious denial.



# Chapters 1-2

## Chapters 1-2 Summary and Analysis

Despite society's modern trappings, people feel the tug of a distant past, when God is a woman. For years, Stone explores legends, temple sites, statues, and rituals of female deities and clergy, and discovers that what she has accepted from teachers about sun/moon gods and earth/heaven symbolism is wrong. Females appear to invent not just agriculture but also writing, and female deities are extolled around the world as healers, and their priestesses serve as physicians. Our images about female intellect are removed from prehistoric and ancient historic attitudes. Worship of female deities is found everywhere, and stories about them are hardly "innocent childlike fables", but have a specific point of view, guiding perception and teaching the young and impressionable how to behave, what to emulate or avoid, what is socially acceptable, and what is natural. Myths that grow from a religion serving a female deity view womanhood differently from those created by male-oriented religions.

What influence has the Adam and Eve myth had on a female child, telling that her entire sex is easily tricked, defiant, and provoking, and that she must suffer "pain in childbearing", be ruled by a husband, and accept silence and subjugation in church? Even secular society portrays women as conniving, contriving, flirtatious, gullible, simple-minded, and needing to be kept in line. Other creation myths from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Africa provide context: Genesis is just another attempt at explaining human existence—yet Western civilization accepts this contrived myth as history. The Bible has a second creation account and the Sumerian tablets—from the same region—tell the same story, but deify the woman. The difference is the male God, Yahweh, who with his first prophet, Abraham, arrives thousands of years after the Great Goddess is established in Neolithic times (7000 BCE - and perhaps Paleolithic: 25,000 BCE). The Hebrew scriptures disguise Astarte as the male Ashtoreth and seek to discredit her.

The Upper Paleolithic existence of the Goddess is speculative, since it precedes writing, but is suggested by three separate lines of evidence: 1) Anthropological analogy to "primitive" matrilineal societies today, which do not connect coitus and conception, revere females as the sole givers of life, and trace lines of descent through females; 2) Religious beliefs and rituals originating as ancestor worship in conjunction with disposing of the dead; female statues represent the whole tribe and ultimately a "Divine Ancestress;" and 3) "Venus figures" found in primitive settlements from Spain to Siberia, hailing from 25,000 BCE.

The materials, size, and style of Paleolithic and Neolithic figurines are similar. With the coming of agriculture to Canaan, Anatolia, and the upper Tigris-Euphrates, there appear small clay Mother-Goddess figurines, which continue into the Chalcolithic period (5000 BCE), with artifacts at Arpachiyah being consistent with Goddess worship in the historical period. By 4000 BCE, Goddess figures reach the Persian Gulf and Egypt. As writing begins ca. 3000 BCE, Goddess worship is described throughout the Middle East.



Archeology indicates that these societies revere the Mother-Goddess as a supreme deity, who provides life and a controllable food supply. At some point, the Goddess acquires a son or brother, who is also her lover/consort, but she retains precedence. The Young-god dies, creating annual ritual lamentations among her devotees. As Northern European cultures invade, ca. 2400 BCE, a new theology is amalgamated, and over the next two thousand years, the male gains dominance and sometimes kills the Goddess, whose rituals and customs, nevertheless, resist destruction and belittlement.

The northerners adopt Sumerian cuneiform writing and produce a vast literature during the period of 2000-1800 BCE. Little survives from the period when the Goddess is supreme, but watching transitions allows for one to extrapolate backwards about the nature of religion in Neolithic times. The few scholars who deal with female deities suggest their veneration is minor or unusual because the Goddess has many names. One must realize that these are epithets in many languages for a single deity revered as God is today. In Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* (second century CE), the Goddess speaks of herself as "Nature", manifesting herself in various gods and goddesses, controlling the world, worshiped under countless names, referred to in many ways, but her proper name is "Queen Isis". The artifacts, symbols, and rituals associated with her worship remain consistent from Sumer to the classical Greco-Roman world—across a span of some twenty-five thousand years, from Northern Europe and the British Isles to Syria, Libya, and Saudi Arabia.

Neolithic art at Catal Hüyük, Hacilar, and Elam shows the male as subsidiary. The Mother-Goddess rules the Elamite pantheon in the third millennium BCE, but gives way to her consort in the second. Robertson Smith claims the Semitic religion results from "the juxtaposition of ancestor worship and a female kinship system". Henri Frankfort agrees that in Mesopotamia the Goddess rules as the source of life, with her son/husband a mere complement. Sir James Frazer writes extensively of the Egyptian Isis and her weaker brother/husband Osiris and notes Egypt practices "mother-kinship" for property and descent. H. J. Rose speaks of the Greek Goddess forming temporary unions to produce offspring rather than marrying. E. O. James notes that the Mesopotamian Goddess resuscitates her mate, proving she is the ultimate source of life and regeneration and he is merely "instrumental" in the process.

As advances in the breeding and domestication of animals clarify the male's role in reproduction, the mythological spouse gains importance. Arthur Evans notes that even after males gain control over government in Minoan culture, the Goddess remains supreme; the male is a "satellite". L. R. Farnell observes that in Crete the male deity is originally a "background" figure. Robertson Smith claims that in Arabia the traits of the dominant Goddess are transferred to the male before she is subordinated, at the same time as the kinship turns patriarchal.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary and Analysis

What effect does worshipping a female deity and living in a matriarchal society have on women? Various cause-and-effect theories associating women's status in society and the worship of female deities are offered alongside "reams of pseudo-poetic material", claiming that the female's ability to produce children so awes males that they worship women, but it appears that the critical element is "matrilineal descent of name and property" rather than matriarchy ("women in power"). In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several scholarly "prophets" like V. Klein suggest that home ownership in early societies makes males dependent on females and often produces polyandry. They suggest that this is an evolutionary stage for all societies. This theory has fallen out of fashion, but remains well attested in many parts of the world. Archeology has produced much evidence that the early scholars lack, including law codes preceding Hammurabi's, but none dates from before the Northern invasions and the beginning decline in Goddess-worship. Still, they offer insights into the status of women in these societies.

In 49 BCE, Diodorus of Sicily writes respectfully and admiringly about women wielding power in the lands where he travels: Ethiopia, with its communal marriage, and Libya, where the sex roles of Greek antiquity are reversed and a warrior-Goddess (Neith) is worshiped. In prehistoric Upper and Lower Egypt, the Goddess is worshiped under different names and given different symbols (the vulture for Nekhebt and the cobra for Ua Zit). From 3000 BC onward, Nut is said to have created everything, setting Ra, the sun god, in the sky. Diodorus writes about Isis as the inventor of agriculture, healer, physician, and lawgiver, the latter accounting for contemporary queens having more power than kings and wives' authority over husbands. Herodotus and Sophocles, writing centuries before Diodorus, both observe that Egyptian men mind the house and women attend to business. Papyri reveal that Egyptian women appear as parties in civil litigation, even against fathers and husbands; they own and control all property. As late as the fourth century BCE, women chose and divorce husbands side-by-side with patriarchal marriage. Love poems hint that Egyptian women do the wooing. Dr. Margaret Murray traces royal families to prove that Egyptian culture in most periods is matrilineal; brother-sister marriage develops to give sons access to the royal privilege and international marriages are forbidden. Nevertheless, even in Egypt, women slowly lose prestige; by the eighteenth Dynasty, under the influence of Indo-Europeans, women are no longer clergy, but rather merely temple musicians.

In Mesopotamia (Sumer and Babylon), women also lose ground as the Sumerian goddesses are relegated to the role of consorts to particular gods, leaving only the Underworld ruled by a Goddess, and even she is forced to marry against her will. In 2300 BCE, the Urukagina reform bans polyandry, which laws in Eshnunna ca. 2000 BCE regulate in favor of wives. "Naditu" women work in business, hold real estate, lend money, and work as scribes. In Sumerian hymns, females precede males. Gilgamesh



credits the invention of writing to a woman. The Sumerian Queen of Heaven, Inanna, is powerful and omnipotent, but thirteen centuries later evolves into the grieving Ishtar. In Elam, slightly east of Sumer, matriarchy thrives in the third millennium BCE and women are often still sole heirs of property. The Goddess later becomes merely the "Great Wife" of her former consort Humban. In Shushinak, "Father of the Weak" transforms into "King of the Gods" and by the eighth century BCE, "Protector of the Gods of Heaven and Earth".

By 1900 BCE, the Akkadians supplant the Sumerians culturally and politically to form Babylon. Their language is used across the Middle East, but the Sumerian religion survives and its language is used in worship everywhere. By 1600 BCE, the Kassites, ruled by Northern invaders, gain control of Babylon. Female deities give way to males, as Marduk murders Tiamat, but Babylonian women retain some independence, as is seen in the Code of Hammurabi. This is consistent with matriarchal descent. They own possessions that husbands can use but which revert to them in case of widowhood or divorce; they can acquire property, take legal action, enter contracts, and share in their husband's inheritance. Women who do not want to be responsible for their husband's premarital debts may receive a written document to this effect, suggesting that women manage financial affairs there as in Egypt. Hammurabi's laws describe inheritance rights of temple priestesses, suggesting that the question is in flux. Ishtar claims to be present at all legal trials, and at Nimrud, documents show women still serve as judges and magistrates in the eighth century BCE. Some priestesses act as oracles, providing military and political advice to royalty, but they are admittedly fewer than male oracles. By the second millennium BCE, Babylonian women are economically controlled by male relatives.

Northward, in Anatolia (modern Turkey), the Great Goddess is worshiped in Neolithic times, but the Indo-Europeans invade before 2000 BCE, blend with the Hatti natives, and become known as the Hittites. Most of the goddesses in Hittite literature are Hatti, including the Sun Goddess who marries and becomes subservient to the storm god. Hittite queens often serve as her high priestesses, perhaps reflecting the Northerners' efforts to legitimize their rule. In Western Anatolia, matrilineal descent and Goddess worship continue into classical times, with Strabo describing it in Armenia. Goddess-worshippers may have fled westward to Ephesus, Lycia, Lydia, and Caria and built temples. Diodorus describes males performing domestic duties there and queens ruling and passing sovereignty to daughters. In Lydia, Hercules is said to have been Queen Omphale's "servile lover". Greek accounts of women defending ancient shrines and expelling invaders may be the basis for "Amazon" legends.

Classical writers link culturally Lycia and Caria to Crete, where Neolithic Goddess figures are found. Cretan society is matrilineal and perhaps matriarchal until the Dorian invasion. Cretan women are sexually free and enjoy high standing. In Mediterranean society generally prior to the Northern invasion, kings and chieftains attain their positions by marriage. Women initially control religious forms and rites, since they are "natural intermediaries" with female deities. Male gods and priests are a late development and always subordinate. At Knossos, the priestess-queen personifies the Goddess and brings to worshipers a true epiphany. Hawkes claims that male-female





relations in Cretan society must resemble this religious symbolism and contrasts its open approach to sexuality with the repressed Muslim approach.

Mycenae is the name given by scholars to Cretan cultural sites on the Greek mainland. Some group them with the "Sea People" and others with Philistines or the Hyksos "shepherd kings" who earlier rule Egypt. The Linear B tablets found at Knossos and dated 1400 BCE suggest Indo-Europeans may have migrated to Crete, adopted local Minoan customs and religion (including nature goddesses), and later brought these to pre-Hellenic Greece. The Mycenaean Age (1450-1100 BCE) begins at the time of Moses and lasts through the times about which Homer writes. The Achaean invasions (thirteenth century BCE) weaken the matrilineal tradition and the Dorians make patrilineal succession normative. The Northerners introduce the worship of Dyaus Pitar ("God Father") who becomes the Greek Zeus and the Roman Jupiter.

E. Butterfield looks at this transitional period, tracing royal lineage to show that such city-states as Argos, Thebes, Tiryns, and Athens, are matrilineal, thanks to the Cretan origins of the Goddess worship, until "the greatest revolution in the history of early Greece" switches kingship and inheritance to male lines, destroys loyalty to the clan, sweeps away the ancient female-led religious dynasties, and finally results in "murderous assaults" on Potnia Mater (the Great Goddess). Hera's failed struggle against Zeus may reflect the conflict. Hawkes observes that despite nineteenth-century scholarly bias, women in classical Greece retain some of the Cretan freedom, particularly in Ionian Ephesus, where they exult in the ancient cults at the Temple of Artemis (Diana). This cult continues in the classical age of Sparta, whose women wrestle naked with men in the gymnasium and marital infidelity is glorified. Spartan women get the handsomest man available impregnate them.

In northern Canaan, Astarte, the "Important Lady of the Royal House", rules in Ugarit in the fourteenth century BCE, where laws governing inheritance resemble those at Elam. Even after the Northern invasion, women's status is not greatly affected. Women act in official capacities among the Ammonites. Women like the Queen of Sheba (ca. 950 BCE) leading Arab tribes and states are attested in the eighth and seventh centuries BCE. By contrast, Hebrew women accept almost totally the patriarchal society decreed by the male Yahweh, ostensibly through Moses (ca. 1300-1250 BCE) (not attested by archeology). It is enforced until Israel falls in 722 BCE and Judah in 586 BCE; and then becomes part of the Judeo-Christian Bible. Priest/archeologist Roland de Vaux claims that the social and legal position of Hebrew women is inferior to their neighbors because they are needed to bear many sons. Therefore, divorce is forbidden to them, they are their husbands' possession and can be sold, daughters inherit only in the absence of a male heir, female vows are void without father or husband's consent, and there are no female clergy. Stone amplifies: Hebrew women cannot engage in business and are killed for losing their virginity before marriage—even if raped. This is found in no other Middle Eastern legal system.

Nevertheless, two incidents show the ancient Goddess religion surviving among the Hebrews. The reforming King Asa of Israel dethrones his mother (or grandmother), Maacah, wife of King Rehoboam of Israel, for having made an "asherah". The context (1



Kgs. 15.2-14) suggests broader "pagan" practices have crept back in. The second incident dates from 842 BCE, when the daughter of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of Israel claims the throne of Judah as her own. Jezebel's parents rule Sidon, where Baal and Ashtoreth are worshiped, and Jezebel's murder is "a political assault upon the religion of the Goddess". During her six-year reign, Queen Athalia reestablishes "paganism", angering the Hebrew priest.

The transition from worshipping female deities to a single supreme male deity coincides with the invasion of Indo-Europeans, who introduce the myth of Marduk (or Ashur), who murders the Goddess to rule over Babylon. In Sumer ca. 2000 BCE, a rapist is put to death, as in pre-invasion times. In Assyria, 1450-1250 BCE, the husband or father of the rape victim must rape the rapist's wife or daughter and/or marry the victim to the rapist. The Hebrews incorporate the last element—or put the victim to death. Assyrian law for the first time punishes abortion by death. The Urukagina reforms (ca. 2300 BCE) for the first time forbid women having two husbands. In Eshnunna, men who marry a new woman after the first wife gives birth are expelled and disinherited; if a man's wife bears another man's child while he is away at war, he must accept her back. There is no punishment for adultery. Hammurabi expects an unfaithful wife to take an oath at the temple and return to her husband, but Assyrians and Hebrews let the husband kill both wife and lover. Laws are codified to reflect specific incidents and situations, making it hard to compare over time, but the Hebrew legislation stands out as harsh. Note that Hebrew women are excited over male heirs, whereas in matrilineal societies, the birth of daughters is a special blessing. These attitudes, which affect young girls' self-esteem and development, seem to be linked with the worship of Goddess as supreme deity.



# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary and Analysis

The Northern tribes leave no record of when or why they adopt a male deity; they enter history only upon contact with the Goddess-worshipping Middle Easterners. These "battle ax cultures" are pastoral, patriarchal, warlike and expansive, coming southward in sporadic waves over the course of thousands of years, beginning before written records. The vanguard is aggressive warriors and a priestly caste, which then rule the indigenous peoples to whom they feel culturally superior. The invasions are as much religious crusades as territorial conquests. They establish themselves on the Iranian plateau by the fourth millennium BCE, in Anatolia in the late fourth early third, and in the Middle East soon after 2000 BCE, pushing southward into Mesopotamia and Canaan. Myths in every region witness how the locals react to the suppression of Goddess worship and the "intricate interlacing" of opposing political theologies. Surviving documents suggest the priestly scribes write out of political motive more than religious fervor about supreme male deities and the institution of kingship.

Indo-European male deities are usually storm gods, blazing high on mountains in fire or lightning. In some areas, this god is "annexed" to the Goddess as a husband, but in some myths, he is a rebel who kills the older female deity or is promised supremacy in the divine hierarchy. In many myths, the female deity is symbolized by a serpent or dragon and associated with darkness and evil. Sometimes the attack on the Goddess religion is allegorized. Rarely is the original supreme deity ignored by the conquerors, so her deposition can be traced through myths. The male deity is always a "powerful champion of light". The female religions assimilate the male deities for thousands of years after the initial invasion. The Indo-European light/dark (good/evil) duality, mythological defeat of the serpent by a male deity, and strong leadership by a ruling class all inform Hebrew religion and politics. This will be developed in Chapter 5.

India shows clear evidence of the cultural impact of light-skinned Indo-Aryan barbarians encountering dark-skinned, culturally superior, Goddess-worshipping Dravidians. The illiterate Northerners adopt two alphabets for their Sanskrit language in which they produce the Vedas (ca. 1500-1200 BCE). Rg Veda hymns depict the original ashura—living power—before creation breaking down into two cosmic groups. Indra, "Lord of the Mountains", kills Danu and her son Vrtra, causing cosmic waters to flow, which give birth to the sun. This is an Indo-European myth commonly found after invasions. The Rg Veda denigrates the female intellect and shows Indo-Aryan-style male ancestor worship. As Indo-Aryan culture spreads, the Hindu religion emerges, with the light-skinned Brahmin priests enjoying the highest racial status. The later Bhagavad-Gita shows Rama bringing culture and light to aborigines who are called demons if they refuse and monkeys or bears if they accept.

Light figures everywhere: in fire sacrifices, "astral bodies", lightening, skin color, and the gods Brahma—"he whose form is light"—Mithra and Dyaus Pitar. Archeology shows



that the Indus Valley has contact with Sumer and Elam, and that Goddess worship is so sufficiently entrenched that whenever it is safe after the Northern invasion (particularly in isolated areas), these beliefs revive. As late as 600 CE, Devi ("Goddess") appears in the Puranas and Tantras, and is dubiously incorporated into the Brahmanic literature. Lower castes continue to worship the Great Mother goddess in South Indian villages.

In Iran, written records begin only in 600 BCE with Zarathustra's Zend Avesta, but the mythology has much in common with the Indians, including a "great father" who represents light, Ahura Mazda. The light/dark, good/evil duality is everywhere in Iranian religious thought. Ahriman, the devil-figure, is blinded by Ahura's light and flees. The duality recurs in the Manichean texts of 200 CE, with Mithra becoming a major figure, defeating the demons. The most interesting Iranian figure is Gayo Mareta, the first-created man, whose myth shares elements with Indra. In the fourth century CE, Ahura Mazda curiously assigns to Anahita the task of watching over all creation, showing a revival of the Goddess religion.

The Hurrians are a non-Indo-European people originally from around the Caspian Sea. Known in the Old Testament as Horites or Horims, they settle in the mountains north of Assyria in the second half of the third millennium BCE, and become prominent in Urkish Nuzi, Tell Brak, and Nippur. The Hurrians are ruled by an Aryan warrior caste and worship the old Indian deities. The word "Hurrian" may come from the Iranian word hara, "mountain", or the Sanskrit hari, "golden yellow", or the golden mountain where the Aryan ancestors reside after death. Some speculate that Ubaid peoples precede the Hurrians, bringing the Sumerian language, akin to Ural-Altai tongues north and west of the Caspian Sea. The Ubaid break up Halaf culture, massacre Arpachiyah, and establish a center at Eridu, near where the Tigris and Euphrates join the Persian Gulf. Circa 4000 BCE, the Ubaid build the first temple set on a platform, perhaps simulating a mountain. It is free of Goddess figurines. In prehistoric times, Eridu worships a fish or water god, which is consistent with their introducing irrigation canals. Eridu is said to be where "kingship was first lowered from heaven" in the person of Alalu of Sumer.

Circa 3400-3200 BCE, a mountain race familiar with stone cutting appears in non-mountainous Sumer, and Nippur and Kish develop as population centers. The mountain-god Enlil rapes the Goddess' daughter, Ninlil, who is later said to be his wife. Early Sumerian tablets associate the Divine Ancestress with particular towns: Ninsikil in Dilmun, Nammu, Nina, Nanshe in Lagash, Nidaba in Erech, and Ininni who calls herself Shala, "Mighty queen Goddess who designs heaven and earth". Nigal or Nikkal ("Great Lady", part of the name of several Anatolian high priestess-queens), wife of the moon god Nannar, is earlier worshiped as the sun; making her mother of Utu, the sun, is probably a later innovation. She declines from having her own shrine in Ur to sharing one with her husband to being removed to a small annex.

The Goddess Ninhursag (or Ninmah) is wife and sister to Enki, after earlier being the creator of humans with the help of Nammu. Ereshkigal, later Mistress of the Underworld, is carried thence as a prize when Enlil takes possession of earth. Inanna becomes the daughter of Ningal when Utu becomes the sun, and, while still highly revered when the legend is committed to writing (ca. 2000 BCE), she has clearly "lost

what was previously Hers". Enki establishes order in what Inanna has created, introducing irrigation canals and appointing deities to various positions. Women and the Goddess clearly lose ground throughout the historical period, and the process may have been going on for millennia. Inanna continues to be revered as the bestower of rights to shepherds and kings, suggesting matrilineal rights still apply to royalty. There may have been a revival of Goddess religion between the two periods, for one myth deals with the transfer of the cultural center from Eridu to Erech, as Enki charges Inanna with stealing the gifts of civilization from him. Note that farming and craft vocabulary are non-Sumerian, suggesting borrowing.

A third male deity enters Sumer during the Hurrian invasion: An or Anu, successor to Alalu in the Hurrian and Hittite Kumarbi myth, and later part of the Enuma Elish legend, in which he is the second deity after Enki unable to subdue the Creatress-Goddess Tiamat. Marduk first obtains a promise he will reign supreme among the deities if he succeeds before undertaking the feat—reminiscent of the Indra myth of the same period. Marduk appears to be known in the Hammurabi period, but the myth of his supremacy does not appear until the non-Indo-European Kassites conquer Babylon. Circa 2100 BCE, the Sumerian King Ur Nammu reforms taxes and rids the land of "big sailors". Enki, Enlil, Anu, and Marduk appear each to have been introduced by a foreign Northern people and gradually assimilated by the Goddess-worshiping people. Marduk and his successor in Assyria, Ashur, are worshiped in societies where women have lost ground.

Egypt may also have been invaded from the North before 3000 BCE, uniting Upper and Lower Egypt for the first time under a single king. He demotes the Cobra Goddess (North) and Vulture Goddess (South). Archeology suggests contact between First Dynasty Egyptian tombs and the temples of Mesopotamia in the Jemdet Nasr period. Ubaiids leave Sumer for Egypt as newer groups are entering. Artifacts suggest a massive sea incursion. By the late fourth millennium BCE, the "Followers of Horus" rule Egypt as a "master race". The Hor tribes make Memphis their capital and install the male god, Hor-Wer, who fights a ritual combat with Set, his uncle or brother, in a classic light/darkness motif. After death, Hor becomes Osiris, and Set cuts his body into fourteen pieces. During the combat, Set tries to mate sexually with Horus, which is more easily understood as Set being the serpent of darkness, Zet (the Greek Typhon belonging to the Goddess Gaia) being identifiable, perhaps, with the Neolithic Egyptian Cobra Goddess.

Around the time of the Second Dynasty, Heliopolis (Annu) becomes home to a school of priest-scribes who worship a sun god, Ra, who rides in a boat. By the Fifth Dynasty, Ra and Horus are equated, and Ra fights the dragon Zet (later called Apophis), a daily sunrise struggle better fitted to Northern Europe than Egypt. As Horus is assimilated into the Goddess religion as the son of Isis, the Memphis priests put forward a great father god, Ptah, who masturbates the other gods into being, eliminating the need for a divine ancestress. Nevertheless, the Goddess is not lost as the foreign gods are assimilated and synthesized. Matrilineal descent lasts well into historical times. The nature of Ua Zit is retained in several later female deities, including Hat-Hor, symbolized by a cow with a cobra on her forehead, and Maat, who symbolizes all that is good in the universe. She



embodies the "uraeus cobra" and is variously known as the "Eye" of Horus, Ra, or Ptah; law and order exist only while a king keeps the dangerous Maat under control.

Circa 2200 BCE, the Hittites conquer Anatolia and superimpose an "exclusive caste" on the Hatti people, like the Shemsu Hor in Egypt, and the Aryans in India. Physically larger than the locals and possessing horse-drawn war chariots and iron weapons, the Indo-Europeans easily triumph and impose draconian laws. Various Hatti goddesses survive and are known as "The Throne", the title associated with Isis in Egypt. Mountain storm gods are introduced, but for centuries outside the capital, the Sun Goddess Wurusemu still reigns supreme. The queen apparently serves as high priestess to the Sun Goddess Arinna, suggesting the early kings gain legitimacy by marrying Hattian priestesses, retaining the old shrines, and assuming the high priesthood personally. The myth of the dragon's defeat is found in a major nature festival at Hattusas. The king may have portrayed the storm god or the youth Hupisayas, who sleeps with the Goddess Inara to gain sufficient strength to help defeat the dragon, Illyuankas, who may be related to the Hatti Goddess Lilwanis. Hittite armies often clash with Egyptians, trying to control Canaan. There is considerable intermarriage during the Eighteenth Dynasty (150-1300 BCE). Tiy and Nefertete, mother and wife of Ikhнатon, may be of Hittite or Hurrian descent. He carries out a religious revolution, making Ra supreme deity, and loses interest in Canaan, giving his enemies free hand. Soon after the deaths of Ikhнатon and his son-in-law, Tutenkhamon, a "Queen of Egypt" writes the Hittite king asking for a son in marriage.

In twentieth to sixteenth century BCE Canaan, there is continual "nomadic disruption" as Indo-Aryan and Horite princes and nobles establish themselves. The name Baal may date back to Hurrian and Hittite times, when the Sanskrit bala (bull) equates to the Akkadian tura and both mean power. Baal comes to be the male consort of the Goddess in Canaan and the consort of Ashtoreth after the time of Moses. His pseudonym, Tammuz, is still heard in Jerusalem in 620 BCE. Another Ugarit male deity who consorts with Asherah is El. When referred to as Thor-El, he may have ties to the Indo-European storm god as well.

Another Indo-European group, the Luvians (or Luwians) live directly south of the Hittites in Cilicia, where the Goddess-worshipping culture of Catal Hüyük once flourished. Little is known about them beyond that they sweep destructively over western Anatolia ca. 2300 BCE, and speak a language related to Hittite. Their major deity is a storm god named Tarhund, Tarhunta, or Tarhuis. The hieroglyphs they leave are mostly "votive" rather than mythological, suggesting a caste of priestly scribes as in India and Egypt.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary and Analysis

The ancient Hebrews cannot be considered in a religious, political, or cultural vacuum. The Indo-Europeans in Harran may have influenced Abraham, father of the tribes and first prophet of Yahweh. "Yahweh" may derive from the Sanskrit meaning "everflowing", and Abraham relates to the Indian Brahmins, whose patriarchal attitudes resemble the Hebrews. The Hebrews are not Indo-European, but neither are they totally Semitic from the start. By the time they settle in Canaan after Egypt they are mostly Semitic, but the priestly Levites may be related somehow to the Luvians. Note that the earliest extant texts of the Hebrew Scriptures are found at Qumran; the next earliest are a Greek translation. Otherwise, the "Jewish Canon" dates no earlier than the tenth century CE. The Yahwist texts are written ca. 1000 BCE and the Priestly sections ca. 600 BCE. Editing takes place over many centuries, including "jealous censorship" by priests.

Biblical scholars date Abraham to 1800-1700 BCE and Moses to 1300-1250 BCE, rather a large gap for seven generations. Moving Abraham back to 1550 would still put Noah at 2000-1900 BCE, well within the time of the arrival of Indo-Europeans in the Middle East. Genesis says Abraham lives at "Ur of the Chaldees" near Eridu, but thereafter refers to Harran as his country. By 1800 BCE many Hurrians have moved into Mitanni. Abraham's relatives are named Na Hor and Haran. Genesis has many references to the Hittite and Horite people; when Abraham has to bury his wife Sarah, he buys land from Ephron the Hittite. The land remains Hittite at the time Jacob dies in Egypt and is taken back to Canaan for burial. Abraham sends to Harran to find a daughter for his son Isaac. Son Esau marries two wives, a Hittite and a Horite, and then settles among the Horites. Later in the Bible, Hittite becomes a term of rebuke, suggesting Sarah or Abraham's mother (whose name is omitted in Genesis) is Indo-European.

The Hebrew custom of "levirate marriage", whereby a widow is assigned to her brother- or father-in-law is well attested to in ancient India and reaches the Middle East only after the Northern invasions. Stone admits that scholars who point to close literary and linguistic links between Indo-Europeans and Hebrews do not go as far as she is suggesting, but point to the fact that both Hebrews and Greeks "start their historiographic careers on Hittite substratum". The Hebrews retain memory of a mythic battle between Yahweh and the serpent Leviathan, preserved in the ancient Psalms, whereas in Genesis it is replaced by the legend of Adam and Eve. Psalm 74 sounds much like the Marduk legend and other text from Ugarit, where Indo-European rulers are on good terms with Hittite kings. In Ugarit, Baal's father is Dagon and the dragon is Lotan, Lawtan, or Leviathan. After the division of the Hebrew states, Baal, the storm god, assimilates with the Goddess Tammuz, and by 1000 BCE is associated with Ashtoreth. Long before Baal has a temple of his own, he and Yahweh may have been the same deity, for Ugaritan descriptions closely resemble Ps. 92 and 104.



The Aryans regard themselves as racially superior to the conquered peoples, which may help explain the curious scene in Gen. 6:2-4 regarding the "Nephilim". Rather than follow many modern works suggesting that spacemen are responsible for human culture, one can read this as a reference to Aryans being larger and more powerful than the Mediterranean people who worship the Goddess. The Aryan priests despise interbreeding and present the story of Noah and an arkful of relatives surviving a great flood. Four centuries after the Yahwist writings but contemporaneous with the Priestly ones, Iranian texts speak of a seven-step creation remarkably similar to the Hebrew account, but sufficiently different to rule out direct loan one from the other. More likely, both stem from a single earlier source. Another Pahlavi text depicts Jeh, "queen of all whore demons", as being sexually defiled by the devil Ahriman so she can defile all women, who in turn defile all men. The attitude is similar to Genesis.

In another Iranian tale, Yima is warned that people have sinned, so he should build a vara (fortress) within which fire, food, animals, and humans can be preserved—in pairs. The biblical account may not be a simple borrowing from the Sumerians, but an account of a "mountain race" arriving before the Jemdet Nasr period, remembering their ancestor's arrival in Aratta and their own arrival in Sumer, describing the extensive rainfall they find. It eventually comes to be associated with Abraham's ancestor Noah and with the Iranian Yima. Sumer has no high elevations on which an ark could land, but in eastern Turkey there rises a 17,000-foot mountain in the land known as Uratu—precisely the region from which the Indo-Europeans begin their trek into Anatolia. Irrigation canals also link the Bible and Sumer. Genesis 2:6 and the legend of the Sumerian Paradise, Dilmun, both show a newly created world that lacks vegetation until water is brought up from the earth. Ubaidian Eridu is certainly such a dry land, where the first irrigation canals are developed two thousand years before the tales are told.

Abraham, Joseph, and Moses all link the Hebrews with Egypt's Indo-European royalty. The Eighteenth Dynasty knows many marriages to Hittite and Hurrian princesses, helping break matrilineal descent patterns. Earlier "pharaoh" denotes the royal house rather than a king. The Bible shows Moses being adopted as an infant by the pharaoh's daughter and given a name that is a frequent part of royal names. Earlier, Joseph receives authority over all Egypt because of his ability to interpret dreams. Even earlier, Abraham and Sarah go to Egypt during a famine and the pharaoh takes her into his household as his wife.

The Indo-European worship of mountains is likewise seen in stories about Mount Sinai/Horeb, the "mountain of God" in Exodus and throughout the Book of Psalms, in terms similar to Zeus atop Mount Olympus. Baal, the Hittite and Hurrian storm gods, Indra, and Ahura all share the same imagery as Yahweh speaking out of fire atop Horeb.

The Luvians may be most closely related to the emergence of the Hebrew religion, for they may be the precursors of the priestly Levites. Like the Brahmins in India, the Luvians are a priestly caste that hoards sacred hieroglyphs for their own sacred purposes. Brahmins make extensive use of fire sacrifices in elaborate Vedic rituals and consider themselves custodians of the rites—and moral and social superiors to the rest





of society and, indeed, the gods. This sounds like the extraordinary position occupied by the Levites among the Hebrew tribes. Moses and his brother Aaron are both born to Levite parents and Moses is told by Yahweh to separate this tribe from the others to serve as priests. High priests may marry only virgins within the tribe. Only Levites may enter the "Tent of Presence". They lead the desert march across Sinai, judge distinct units, and use silver trumpets to summon leaders or all Hebrews to assemblies. As they prepare to invade Canaan, male adults capable of military service are counted in the other eleven tribes; later all male Levites over one month are counted. Penalties for breaking Levite laws are harsh, including stoning to death.

Fire sacrifices are as important to the Levite rites as to the Brahmins. The books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy describe the rituals in detail, including how the other tribes contribute to the support of Levi through the required "burnt offerings" of foods and gifts of silver, gold, and property required as a "ransom-for-life" from every male over twenty. The seven-year jubilee guarantees Levites, who sell their houses get them back, and they control land sales to other tribes. They receive the extensive "dedication offerings" that Yahweh requires every year in the form of "holy gifts" from his people. It is the Levites' "allotted portion". Because they receive all this, the Levites have no patrimony, but are allocated forty-eight towns and surrounding fields within the eleven tribal areas. The Levi's costume is prescribed in detail, including grand headdresses reminiscent of Hittite invaders. When Moses finishes writing Yahweh's laws, he hands the book over to the Levites to place in the Ark of the Covenant. Only they have access thereafter to interpret, censor, or change it.

It is difficult to see how twenty-two thousand male Levites could be born in three generations between Levi and Moses, his great-grandson. Perhaps they are assigned this unique heritage to justify their Indo-European-style relationship to the other tribes. The changing of Jacob's name to Israel may suggest they understand their ancestry is "symbolic rather than biological". At any rate, Abraham is considered the father of the Hebrew people. The Psalms suggest that the original Hebrews are drawn from "every land", drawn together under the "emblem of Israel" and directed by the Levites. Levi and the Luvians may both derive their name from the Indo-European words describing volcanic eruptions and the associated blazing light. Indo-European male deities live on glowing mountains, like Mount Horeb, at whose foot the Hebrews tremble and beg Moses to speak with Yahweh on their behalf. Moses reminds them later that they see no figure on the mountain, but only hear a voice, and how he grinds the "pagan" calf they make in his absence into dust and casts it into the torrent that flows down the mountain. The Psalms show Yahweh heaping coals on the wicked, consuming them with fire, blazing like fire, lighting up the world, and causing mountains to melt like wax. The imagery of a volcano is hard to ignore. North of Lake Van in Uratu, in Cilicia, the Caucasus region, and near the Caspian Sea are a series of volcanoes, some still active. East of Sinai in Arabia there are volcanoes, all extinct. Ararat remains active. Zoroastrians still pray to fire and Kurds light fires on mountaintops in New Year's celebrations. Volcano worship by Indo-Europeans may explain the importance of fire rituals among Levites and Brahmins. Yahveh is Sanskrit means "everflowing", suggesting volcanism; this may better explain the name Yahweh than hunting for Semitic meanings.



The Dead Sea Scrolls, and particularly "The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness", show the Levites still in control in the third century BCE, ten centuries after Moses. Many scholars link this find to Iran and the worship of Ahura, but the texts do not mention Ahura and the light/ darkness duality is not foreign to the Hebrews. It underlies the description of creation in Gen. 1:3. The people at Qumran are survivors of the southern kingdom, the northerners having dispersed into Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, and Iraq. The Qumran scroll describes the Levites' banners, dress, duties, and position in detail, including the use of trumpets to signal military maneuvers.

German archeologists are the prime excavators of Hittite culture, revealing that nasili is the real name of the Hittite language, and Nessians (or Nassians) the invaders' name; Nuzi is their capital. One wonders about the influence these reports might have through the popular press on Hitler's self-styled "Aryan" race in Nazi Germany. It would add irony to the tragedy of World War II and the atrocities committed against the Hebrew people. The last two centuries have seen major revisions in all areas of religion, archeology, history, and science in the wake of archeological finds. They may yet help see the relationship between fire atop Horeb, Luvian culture, patriarchal laws, and the Hebrew insistence on destroying Goddess religion. Knowing that invading Indo-Europeans affect worship of the Goddess in waves over millennia helps understand how myths, rituals, and customs change and male gods and kings take over.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary and Analysis

In the Neolithic and earliest historic periods, female monarchs/high priestesses rule divinely, appointed by female divinities with males attaining power only through marriage. Temples are the core of communities, whence not only religious business, but all urban and rural activities are directed. Entu is the name of the high priestess in Sumer, Tawawannas in Anatolia; other locales have counterparts for their "Divine Lady". Early Sumerian myths show male and female deities taking part in heavenly decision making, probably reflecting the societies that write the legends. Monotheism reflects a political ideology in which a single person rules, while polytheism images the communal attitude. There is no definite evidence for a relationship between the high priestess' role and the groups of elders.

The priestess, an incarnation of the Goddess, takes not a permanent husband, but rather annual lovers or consorts over whom she is supreme. The symbolism is found in Sumer and Egypt, and survives into early Christianity in the annual mourning over Jesus. The annual death of the son/lover, connected with the ritual sacrifice of the consort king, is attested throughout the Middle East with local adaptations and gradual transitions. There are three separate lines of evidence: 1) accounts of ceremonies that provide the consort the position later called kingship; 2) documents of the rituals that in historic times provide a substitution for actual sacrifice; and 3) detailed descriptions in legends that accompany the substitute rituals and explain them theologically.

The high priestess as an incarnation of the Goddess chooses a lover young enough to be her son; their sexual union is termed hieros gamos ("sacred marriage"). He then becomes her privileged consort and "king" for a specific period of time, usually a year, after which he is ritually sacrificed. The term of office grows longer after the Achaean invasion and permanent kingship begins when the Dorians arrive, ca. 1100 BCE. On the Nile, the king is killed when his health or virility fail. Such killings also take place at Canaan, Cyprus, and Carthage in historic times. In the earliest myths, he is killed for failing to defer to the Goddess' wishes, and fertility and expiation are added later. Only recently have documents been found that make clear Inanna has her consort killed for his arrogance. In Sumer, after Damuzi "proves himself in Inanna's bed", she makes him "shepherd of the land", and when she looks for a replacement for herself in the Land of the Dead, she bypasses those who have kowtowed in favor of her son/lover who acts arrogantly. She orders his death. In third-millennium BCE Sumer, the elective position of "king" becomes hereditary but remains partial. Only with the Ubaid and Shemsu-Hor does kingship "come down from heaven". Until then, the Queen of Heaven takes the initiative in sacred marriage. Nimah rituals and Ninlil festivals explain the establishment of different dynasties. By the time of Lipit-Ishtar, ca. 1930 BCE, ancient customs justify military conquests and marrying the high priestess legitimizes kings in the eyes of the people. High priestesses lose prerogatives.



In eighteenth to sixteenth-century BCE Babylon, Ishtar, an Akkadian Inanna, loses her subordinate son/lover Tammuz accidentally. In the epic Gilgamesh, ca. 2500 BCE, the hero's father disrupts social life in Erech and attends a feast to "fertilize the woman of destiny". Enkidu, a wild man of the woods, appears and is extravagantly treated. Ishtar proposes marriage to Gilgamesh, whom she has admired, but he spurns the proposal, not wanting to share the fate of her past lovers. Ishtar and Enkidu insult Ishtar, kill her heavenly bull, and threaten her. Enkidu is put to death while Gilgamesh goes in search of immortality, leading to the Sumerian flood narrative. The general plot, place, personal names, and other factors suggest contact and conflict with Northern cultures as kingship emerges. Gilgamesh, the military hero, figures in other tales.

Diodorus Siculus describes a similar event on the Upper Nile, when a king rebels against being sacrificed, kills the clergy, and proclaims his reign permanent. By Babylonian times, kings are still appointed by Ishtar but not put to death. Instead, during the New Year Festival, he is stripped and humiliated in public while a substitute is ceremonially installed and hanged. Various accounts describe the king's public ordeal, which is assimilated to Tammuz's death. There are hints of the king expiating and atoning for the sins of the people as an omen. In Egypt, ritual regicide survives into historical times. Circa 3000 BCE, red-haired men are sacrificed at the "grave of Osiris". Isis's son Horus dies and becomes Osiris, and a new Horus is installed. Because Egyptian myths are cumulative, both Horus and Osiris can fight Set but only Osiris dies. In Canaan, at the Egyptians seaport in Byblos, secret rites of Adonis' death and burial survive as late as 150 CE. In Crete, the Goddess consort/offspring is also Adonis. In Minoan Crete, the young, humble, and worshipful god is an instrument of the Goddess' fertility. In classical times, Zeus is worshiped on Crete primarily as the son of his mother, Rhea, and in one legend sexually attacks her. The Indo-European Greeks resent the Cretan legend of Zeus's death, insisting he is immortal.

In fourteenth-century Ugarit, the Goddess religions have assimilated newer Northern ideas, including the death of Baal in battle with Mot. Anath buries Baal and avenges him gruesomely, and allows him to re-enter the world of the living. He thanks her sexually. In Anatolia, after 1000 BCE, the Goddess is known as Cybele and the youth Attis. Some versions of Attis's death are associated with castration. This version reaches Rome, where it is celebrated until 268 CE, with Cybele, in effigy, being tied to a tree, buried, then resurrected on the third day. Cybele is associated with the mother of the dying god Zeus: Ma Rhea. On Cyprus, Aphrodite falls in love with Adonis at first sight, lives with him for a year, and learns he is killed by a wild boar while she is visiting Corinth. These myths survive in Greece, despite Indo-European disapproval. Among the Hebrews, the dying son/lover is found in Jerusalem ca. 620 BCE, as the women face the Lord's house and wail for Tammuz (Ez. 8:14). The Mesopotamian lamentation festival is connected with the Feast of Booths after the "jubilation ceremonies of the sacred marriage".

In some areas, castration replaces the actual death of the substitute king. In Hittite myth, Kumarbi castrates Anu as he ascends to higher rank. The Greeks borrow this to tell of Cronus castrating his father Uranus and usurping his place at his mother Gaia's suggestion. Zeus, in another myth, does overthrow his father. Castration may be the "Indo-European solution to ritual regicide". In Anatolia, Inara declares that once a man



has slept with the Goddess, he may never again sleep with a woman for fear the Goddess' powers will be transmitted. Voluntary castration is the alternative to death. Eunuch priests become common in Sumer, Babylon, Canaan, and especially Anatolia, where they call themselves "Attis". Imitating the son/lover and shedding their maleness is the price males pay to infiltrate the priesthood. Hebrew laws expel from the assembly any male whose genitals have been mutilated, despite the fact that the covenant is sealed by circumcision. This is unlikely a "preventative health measure", but rather meant to emphasize the "maleness" of god-worshipers as opposed to those who join the Goddess. As patrilineal tribes become dominant, ritual regicide disappears and male deities bestow the right to rule to male kings.



# Chapters 7-9

## Chapters 7-9 Summary and Analysis

The Canaanites are commonly said to have been dispossessed of Palestine by the Hebrews because of their "abominations" and "sexual license". That is, they practice what has been common for millennia throughout the Middle East: women live within a wealthy temple complex and have sex with males in the community who come to honor the Goddess. Disagreeing with archeologists who assume this is a form of magic to invoke fertility, Stone declares it is a sign that humans—women first—connect sex and reproduction and integrate the reality into religion. Sex is the Goddess' sacred, holy gift to humanity, and calling her practices "fertility cults" invites future scholars to call today's moralistic religion "sterility cults". Documentary evidence from across the Middle East shows that early societies know about marriage but choose to allow women, married and unmarried, to follow the Goddess' sexual customs. Making it a matter of respectability and propriety is a later invention of the "new morality". No one but the Hebrew and later Christian propagandists show an "anti-sexual bias" or allow fruitless discord between biology and dogma. Judeo-Christian attitudes are strictly political.

From the time of the earliest Indo-European conquests, laws are promulgated about the inheritance, property, business, legal, and economic rights of the qadishtu (sacred women of the temples) and their children. They do not, however, stand in opposition to the sexual customs themselves. There is a trend towards restricting infidelity by married women. The Levites at the time of Moses are the first to demand virginity until marriage for all women and total fidelity of wives to husbands—both on threat of death. Even rape is not excused. The reason for this is the need for clear paternity, which is clearly impossible for the qadishtu. These women are often from wealthy families and their children inherit their names, titles, and property; many daughters become qadishtu. The very term in Akkadian denotes sanctification or holiness, but scholars for two centuries have ethnocentrically and subjectively insisted on calling them temple or ritual prostitutes, distorting and misinterpreting for readers the original social structure.

Sacred women are found in the earlier Sumerian records. They esteem the Queen of Heaven and she in turn protects them. At Erech, they are known as "spotless". Inanna sends the maiden Lilith to gather men into the temple. Lilith later appears in Hebrew mythology as Adam's first wife, the one who refuses to be sexually submissive; later still, she becomes a demon waiting to find spilled sperm to create "illegitimate demon children". The institution continues as Ishtar replaces Inanna and the Babylonian women are known as ishtaritu. Herodotus (ca. 450 BCE) describes remnants of these early customs in Babylon, where women make love to a stranger for their first sexual experience and thereafter have sex only with their husbands. Strabo in the first century BCE describes customs in Anatolia, where the Goddess is Cybele or Anaitis. Children born to the temple women are legitimate and respectable and unmarried women are worshiped. In Corinth ca. 150 CE, Lucian finds strangers are taken as lovers only on the



fast day of Adonis. When the worship of the Egyptian Isis comes to Rome, sacred women follow the ancient customs there.

There are no extant records dealing with the sexual customs of ancient Egyptian women, but the Hebrew reformer-priest Ezekiel suggests Hebrew women pick up debauchery and lewdness there. The worship of Ashtoreth (Astarte) is widespread in the Mediterranean region and includes sacred sexual functions. Sozomenos reports this in temples in Aphaca and Baalbec in Lebanon. The Bible reports qadishtu in Jerusalem carrying out typical, Canaanite customs. The women weep for Tammuz in Yahweh's own temple. Scholars note that Ashtoreth and Yahweh are worshiped side-by-side in Jerusalem and Shiloh. The prophet Hosea shows his wife Gomer behaving as a qadishtu, while demeaning her actions. Only because they make patrilineal primary do the Levites establish a controlling code of sexual morality for women. They condemn the ancient ways as orgiastic, evil, shameful, and sinful. In fact, they are carrying out the political and economic program of the Indo-Europeans by invoking Yahweh. This comes as the Hebrews are poised for the long, ugly battle for Canaan.

Archeology reveals the Queen of Heaven is worshiped for seven thousand years in the birthplace of Judaism and Christianity. The people worship Yahweh and Astarte/Baal "for double insurance". From the Late Bronze Age (1500-1300 BCE), oval pottery "Astarte" plaques are found showing the nude Goddess grasping lily stalks and/or serpents, with her hair in the style of the Egyptian Hathor. Such plaques are common through the seventh century BCE, despite the struggles of Yahwehism. By biblical times Astarte may have lost importance to her husband Baal, but inscriptions still show her as Ruler, Mistress, and Mother. Baal originally designates the temporary owner of property. Legends from Ugarit tell of him asking Anath to help him secure a temple when he has none. By the fourteenth century BCE, Anath slays enemies who frighten and murder Baal. The Hurrians may first have introduced the name as that of a storm god, beginning his dual role like other divine consorts. Even the older male deity Thor-Ei hides in fear from Anath. One can see the male deities of northern Canaan as omnipotent only by postulating that all male deities always are, for Anath displays all the "valor and strength". In the Hebrew Scriptures, Ashtoreth (the south Canaan name) seldom appears alone; she is joined with Baal, as is common in the Indo-European legends of serpent demons. This suggests the Aryan princes' inroads, but the Levites' attack on "Baalism" targets prime elements of the Goddess religion. The Levites purposefully misspell and mispronounce Ashtoreth's name, turn her into a male, and never picture her alone in order to demean her. Religious literature often serves a political end, with contrived mythologies and censorship. Much of the Bible may be based on historical events, but the Levite reports on "pagan" religion are bias and subjective. They have not, however, succeeded in obscuring the ancient worship of the female deity as elsewhere in the Middle East.

The Levite writers claim that Yahweh gives the Hebrews a "promised land", but also reveal it is already populated and fortified. They show Yahweh commanding them violently to destroy the existing religion and replace it with their own and occupy the territory through bloody sieges, much like the earlier Indo-European invasions. God is shown delivering into Moses and Aaron's hands King Sihon of Jahaz, King of Bashan,



and fifty-eight more towns—and they leave not a single survivor. Joshua succeeds them and he puts "under the ban" every inhabitant of Jericho and consigns all valuables to the "Lord's treasury". This is repeated in Ai (twelve thousand victims), Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, and Debir. At Yahweh's command, Joshua massacres everyone in the region. This is hardly the work of a weary slave people seeking a new and better way of life in a "promised land". Rather, it is reminiscent of the Luvian entry into Anatolia. Notably, other texts make clear that survivors are left: some thirty-two thousand "comely" female virgins, whom Deuteronomy allows to be taken as war booty, allows to mourn for a month, and then made wives to Hebrew soldiers. The Hebrews may not treat them harshly, but may set them free when they please. While the numbers may be exaggerated, it is clear that many women enter the Hebrew tribes traumatized by what they have seen and remembering their childhood religions in which women are not as controlled by men.

Several cities where Ashtoreth is still revered are not touched. Canaan is divided among the tribes and the Levites live among them and regularly—and violently—attack the Goddess religion that tempts many. King Solomon is threatened with the loss of his kingdom for forsaking Yahweh and worshiping Ashtoreth. Queen Maacah is dethroned for this "crime". Such defection continues throughout the biblical accounts. In the Book of Jeremiah, describing an incident in the Hebrew colony in Egypt, there is a hint the women follow customs that originate in Jerusalem. The émigré women claim to have prospered at home until they give up offering incense and libations to the Queen of Heaven; now they are destitute; they do not plan on stopping the offerings again—and they have their husbands' approval.

Many passages talk of "idols": the asherah (lower case) found on hilltops, under green trees, and beside Canaanite altars. Stone contends the asherim (plural) are sycamore fig trees, considered in Egypt the "Body of the Goddess on Earth", which also figure in the Adam and Eve myth. The association with the Goddess Asherah is never explained, but they are found everywhere and hold an attraction for the Hebrews. The Levites destroy the symbols of this religion whenever they can, as the Lord commands. Nevertheless, from Gideon to Isaiah, asherim crop up. King Hezekiah "does what is right in the eyes of the Lord", destroying asherim and destroying Moses's bronze serpent kept in the temple since the arrival in Canaan. His son Manassah and grandson Amon restore the asherim. The Levite Hilkiah, serving King Hosiah ca. 630 BCE, again cleanses the temple of asherim. Circa 620 BCE, the women mourning Tammuz in Jerusalem show the ancient ceremonies are alive and well.

"Pagan" ways may have entered through King Solomon's seven hundred-woman harem. His many marriages may have been politically motivated to secure conquered lands. After Solomon, the tribes divide into two nations, with Goddess worship constantly appearing. Asherah and Baal flourish in Samaria (the northern kingdom) in the time of Ahab and Jezebel, she being the daughter of the high priestess and priest at Sidon. Earlier, King Jeroboam makes golden calves, symbols of the Goddess religion. In Judah (the southern kingdom), "pagan idolatries" are practiced under Rehoboam and Abijam. People may consider it the right of Queen Athaliah to rule through matrilineal descent through her mother Jezebel.





The Levites prohibit worshipping "other gods" on penalty of death, even to the extent of massacring whole towns. The Levites want to make every woman the "publicly designated" property of one man, and end assimilation to surrounding culture, where idolatry and immoral conduct are equated. If women see they can own property, have a legal identity, and relate sexually with various men outside Judaism, they will want to, so they are taught that the Almighty will shower them with wrath, disaster, and shame. Nevertheless, "paganism" looms as a problem throughout the Old Testament. Female sexual infidelity becomes the ultimate sin and is used as an analogy for the entire Hebrew people's infidelity to Yahweh. The prophets Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, and Nahum use this metaphor extensively. Jeremiah asks how Yahweh can take back a nation that forsakes him for other gods, that prefers to "play the whore". Yahweh divorces "apostate Israel", but her faithless sister Judah sees and does likewise. Ezekiel writes of two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, who behave lewdly in Egypt and must have their houses burned to make them stop. Nahum, writing in Nineveh, strikes out against Ishtar and sexuality, equating harlotry with witchcraft, and declaring he will show the nations the people's shame. In the Book of Hosea it is unclear when the prophet is denouncing his harlot wife and when Yahweh is attacking the people.

Women are not only insulted but are threatened. Jeremiah warns of famine, violence, and destruction for those who hold to the ways of the Goddess. Isaiah moans about women ruling the Hebrews and children oppressing them. He lists the signs in clothing and jewelry that the Hebrew women are like those around them and then warns that when their men are killed in war, they will beg for someone to take them in—much like during the invasion of Canaan long before. Ezekiel sees a vision of a mysterious figure at the temple gate who tells of "filthy things" going on inside. Ezekiel sees images on the walls and idols, rituals involving asherah branches, and women weeping for Tammuz. Ezekiel consistently uses the term "son of man" to remind readers they are not to consider themselves sons of women. Yahweh orders Ezekiel to prophecy against the women who "make up prophecies out of their own heads".

When threats and insults do not work, the Levites turn to "cold-blooded massacres" and violent religious persecutions. Yahweh tells Ezekiel to mark the foreheads of men in Jerusalem who commit abominations so they can be utterly destroyed. Elijah likewise slaughters four hundred prophets of Baal at the Brook Kishon earlier. The self-righteous throughout history have always condoned mass murder for political and/or religious reasons. Jezebel is the "epitome and symbol of the treacherously evil woman", but her only crime is refusing to give up her parents' religion for that of Yahweh and being framed for the murder of her husband King Ahab. Her gruesome murder is told "in morbid detail" as a warning to "treacherous" women. The motives of the executioner, Jehu, become questionable when he claims her throne—and promptly appears to pay homage to Ashtoreth and Baal in order to assemble their followers so they can be slain. Yahweh declares Jehu has done well.

In the Indo-European fashion, the Levites decree laws to end female autonomy. These define deviation as sin, punishable by "disgraceful and agonizing" death. Scholars date the supposedly Mosaic laws to 1000-600 BCE. While women must belong to the father, or the husband who is usually chosen by her father, the husband is free to have as



many wives and/or concubines as he can afford. If a woman commits adultery, she and her partner are put to death. Any bride found not to be a virgin is to be brought to her father's doorway and stoned to death. The rape of a virgin is treated as a "declaration of ownership"—the victim becomes the rapist's wife automatically. Levite daughters who "profane" themselves by whoring are burnt to death. Married or betrothed women who are raped are killed for having been raped, and the rapist too is stoned. Only if she is assaulted too far out in the countryside for her cries to be heard is she spared. Hebrew kings, by contrast, keep large harems and most Hebrew men apparently have several wives, each of whom is expected to be totally faithful to him. Only if a man infringes on another man's property by making love to his wife or fiancée is he at fault. These "moral" attitudes continue to this day.

Faithful married women face the harrowing prospects of losing their husband's favor and being sent out of his house with a simple "bill of divorcement". Contrast this with Sumerian Eshnunna, where this would result in the husband's losing all his possessions. Males own everything and wives, despite age, health, and efforts to build up the value of the household, have no legal rights or claim on anything. Another wife or two can simply replace them, they having become "nearly worthless as marriage material". There are no records to show how frequently this happens, but it is likely that having the laws on the books frightens women into become submissive, obedient servants.

Despite centuries of suppression and persecution, Goddess religion continues. Abodah Zarah in the Talmud (fifth century CE) is devoted to instructing the pious how to destroy the powers of an "idol" by knocking off its ear or nose (which may account for the many defaced statues). Early Christians zealously take up the duty of suppressing and destroying worship of female deities (despite its adopting the legend of the mother and her dying son). Isis and Artemis are widely worshiped in the Greco-Roman world at the time of the Apostle Paul, and are his particular targets. His sermon at Ephesus has not survived, but the summary makes clear he throws the power of monotheism, Christology, and patriarchy at the dangerous female deities. Clement of Alexandria quotes Christ saying he has come to "destroy the works of the female". In the fourth century CE, the Emperor Constantine destroys "immoral" temples to Ashtoreth throughout Canaan. In 380 CE, Emperor Theodosius closes temples to the Goddess at Eleusis, Rome, and Ephesus. He despises their religion and is best remembered for massacring seven thousand people at Thessalonica. The Parthenon in Athens is converted to a Christian church in 450 CE, as are the remaining temples of Isis later that century by the Emperor Justinian.

In seventh-century CE Arabia, Muhammad ends the national worship of the goddesses Al Lat and Al Uzza, the equivalents of Asherah in the region. Muhammad installs the worship of the male supreme god Allah (whose name simply means God, as Al Lat means Goddess). Many of the legends and attitudes of the Old and New Testaments make their way into the Koran, which speaks of good women being obedient, guarding their unseen parts as God guards them. In the sixteenth century CE, Hebrew scholars compile the Kabbalah. In it, Lilith reappears as a symbol of evil, the "Queen of the demons" who provokes men to sexual acts that will yield the sperm they need to create



demons and illegitimate children who flock around the deathbed of their father, trying to take part of the inheritance away from the legitimate children. Sexual morality is incorporated into Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Sex is safe only when the female is owned by a specific male and any deviation is punishable by death. This makes following the older religion problematic.



# Chapters 10-11

## Chapters 10-11 Summary and Analysis

The Judeo-Christian image of woman personified in Eve motivates this study. Exploring the rites and symbolism of Goddess worship shows the Adam and Eve myth is designed to combat it and incorporates parts of the ancient dragon/serpent myth that has survived in the Psalms and Job. The "female faith" evolves gradually into an intricate tapestry that includes such symbols as serpents, sacred trees, and sexually tempting women who take advice from serpents. The Hebrew Paradise myth pulls together familiar images to teach women who once revere the Goddess why humankind is expelled from its original bliss in Eden.

Many peoples see existence beginning with a serpent, and the reason is probably not phallic symbolism. Throughout the Middle East, female serpents are revered for providing a link to "wisdom and prophetic counsel", not fertility. The Sumerian Goddess Nidaba, patron deity of writing, is portrayed as a serpent, and Ninlil, bringer of agriculture and civilization, has the tail of a serpent. Inanna/Ininna/Nina is a serpent goddess in the Sumerian period and an interpreter of dreams and oracle. Elamite artifacts abound in snakes. Inanna's Babylonian successor, Ishtar, is identified with the planet Venus, called Masat—literally: prophetess. Ishtar sits enthroned in heaven with snakes coiled around her staff. Her priestesses offer prophetic political advice. In Babylonian-Kassite myth, Tiamat, the first human being, possesses the Tablets of Destiny, which Marduk claims after Tiamat's death. Tiamat is described as a dragon or serpent. The symbolism then enters Indo-European mythology.

Crete portrays the Goddess or her priestess as or holding a snake more often than anywhere in the Mediterranean. Snakes appear to be an integral part of religious rituals. At Knossos, "snake tubes" have been excavated that may have been used for feeding sacred serpents in the sanctuaries. There is evidence for the Lady of the Serpents on Crete originating in the Cobra Goddess of pre-dynastic Egypt, ca. 3000 BCE. Hathor is said to have been the serpent who creates everything; for untold reason, she gets angry and threatens to destroy creation and resume her original shape as a serpent. Buto, the foremost religious center of the Cobra Goddess, gives its name to the Goddess and her prophetic shrine. Later it is known as Lato, where Herodotus sees enormous numbers of snake skeletons. Derivatives of the Serpent Goddess of Egypt and Crete are seen in Athena, who is often depicted with serpents. The Erechtheum in Athens, next to the Parthenon, is the home of her snake. The Athenian temples are built on Mycenaean foundations, showing a long pre-history, before Athena becomes the Goddess of Wisdom.

The temple and buildings at Delphi show clear connections with the Serpent Goddess. In the earliest times, the shrine is famous for the divine revelations delivered by priestesses called Pythia, who is depicted with a coiled snake, Python. The earliest versions make Python female. Only later do priests of the male god Apollo take over the



female-built temple of Gaia, the Primeval Prophetess. Many sculptures and reliefs picture Amazons fighting men at this shrine, perhaps showing the initial seizure. Clearly, snakes are familiar at Delphi, kept in Hera's Temple. Even after male deities control divination at Delphi, Olympia, and Dodona, priestesses continue to provide the counsel.

The esteem paid to the Serpent Goddess in Canaan results in the practices being carried to great distances, for Phoenicians sail as far as the British Isles in pre-Roman times, and earlier "Sea People", including the Philistines, travel widely and establish settlements. The Philistines in the Bible are treated as the treacherous, evil, barbarous, and culturally deficient archenemies of the Hebrews. Archeology shows this is false. They come originally from the Isle of Caphtor (Crete) ca 1200 BCE, in the time of Abraham. They may be Mycenaean or Pelasgians. They settle primarily the southwest Canaan, in Philistia (Palestine) and worship the Serpent Goddess. Philistine temples devoted to Ashtoreth have yielded "snake tubes" and "Astarte plaques" like on Crete. Similar finds have been made at Kition on Cyprus. The Serpent Goddess also enters Canaan through Egyptian colonies. A shrine in another colony in the Sinai Peninsula, at Serabit el Khadim, has bilingual inscriptions (Egyptian/Semitic) identifying it with the Serpent Lady. It is along the route taken during the Exodus from Egypt, where Moses makes a "brazen serpent" to placate the wandering people. It is kept in the Jerusalem temple along with other trappings of Asherah worship until the eighth century BCE.

"Baalat", another name for Hathor, leads to another Goddess shrine at Byblos, a Canaanite port founded ca. 6000 BCE near Beirut. Throughout history, Byblos is closely aligned with Egypt. The cobra adorns many artifacts in the temple, built ca. 2800 BCE. Legend claims Osiris dies there and Isis retrieves his body for burial in Egypt. Hebrews describe much of the statuary, but enough remains to show widespread worship in southern Canaan at Taanach, Beth Shemesh, Tell Beit Mersim, Shushan, and Gezer, near Jerusalem. A votive carving of a cobra at Gezer recalls Moses's brazen serpent; in the same sanctuary there is a two-horned Astarte on the high place. Libation bowls suggest the underground chambers may have been for oracular divination. Such practices occur throughout the Middle East.

Oracular shrines, especially in Babylon and Greece, focus on serving political, governmental, and military needs. Priestesses do not see into the future, but communicate directly with a deity who possesses the "wisdom of the universe". The future is not predestined or determined by "uncontrollable fates", so oracular priestesses can position clients to form the best possible strategy. It appears divine revelation is part of the Goddess religion in Sumer from the most ancient times, and is later vital in Babylonia. In the Old and Middle Kingdoms of Egypt, women from important families are called prophetess, serving Hathor and Neith. The Sibyls, identified with Sybilla of Anatolia, may be connected with the Goddess Cybele, who is brought to Rome by the Sibyls of Rome. In 620 BCE, Ezekiel warns about women who dare prophesy "out of their own heads", and centuries later in Ireland, St. Patrick warns about "pythonesses"—prophetesses or witches.

Why are serpents, the Goddess, prophecy, and divine revelation so consistently associated? One clue comes from a tale at the time of the Trojan War in which a young



child, Cassandra, is left in Delphi overnight and found in the morning having her ears licked by sacred snakes, thus imparting to her the gift of prophecy. A Greek prophet, Melampus, learns the language of birds after having his ears licked clean by serpents. Birds (especially doves) and their sounds are associated with oracular shrines in Greece, Crete, and Ascalon. Hebrew and Arabic both derive their words for magic from serpent. Serpents play a part in acquiring supernatural powers in Brittany, and among the Native Americans of the US Southwest. People bitten after immunization by kraits, cobras, and other elapids often enter an emotional and mental state similar to that caused by hallucinogenic drugs. Some victims talk about making up "wonderful verses", which is how oracles in Greece are delivered. Some North American Indian religions use mescaline or psilocybin as "sacraments", both of which share the chemical makeup of snake venom. The sacred serpents of antiquity may have been instruments as well as symbols of divine revelation. The Talmudic tradition says the venom that corrupts Eve and humanity loses its strength when the Law is revealed on Mount Sinai, but regained when Israel worships the golden calf.

Another major element is the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" and its forbidden fruit. Legends of apple trees are known in classical Greece (Hera and the serpent Ladon), but it is more likely the ficus sicomorus (sycamore fig or black mulberry), found in Egyptian writings and murals. Hathor, the Eye of Wisdom, is also called the "Lady of the Sycamore", and its fruit is the "Living Body of Hathor on Earth"; she gives it to the dead to grant continued life. The cluster of fruits is seen on artifacts from Crete, and Egyptian legends say Osiris is buried in a mulberry coffin beneath a live sycamore tree, which symbolizes Isis-Hathor. She feeds him for eternity. Her temple at Byblos marks that burial. This symbolism suggests this is the tree referred to in the Bible as asherah, which Ezekiel connects with the "dead bodies of their kings". Mycenaean tombs contain gold fig leaves. Against a tree do Adonis and Attis die, and Dionysus is associated with the fig tree. After Adam and Eve cover their sexual parts with fig leaves.

The Goddess everywhere is extolled for great wisdom, identified with the serpent, and held to have been the original Creatress and patroness of sexual pleasure and reproduction. She brings life, decrees destinies, and directs lives. The anti-female Levites take a common symbol and turn it into a warning about how humanity falls. The Levite myths legitimize male control over the female by having Yahweh decree it at the beginning of time. They disregard millennia during which women rule to declare that submissive, obedient women have always been the natural state. They must first convince people that procreation is the "original sin", shameful or sinful. Sexual intercourse must cause discomfort and guilt. This mistake continues in Christian rites of marriage, whereby people lacking the "gift of continency" manage to remain "undefiled".

At every turn in the Adam and Eve myth, the Levites attack the tenets of Goddess religion. A thousand years after Sumerian theology says a Mother Goddess creates man from clay, and Egyptians and Babylonians agree that a Goddess is responsible for all, the Levites claim a male does it. In Sumer and Babylon, males and females are created simultaneously in pairs, but the Levites need the male to come first and the woman to come from an insignificant part—his rib. The Levites know biologically this is false but use the story, much like Athena coming from Zeus's head, eliminating the need for a



Divine Ancestress as thoroughly as Ptah masturbating. Eve is Adam's property, meant only to help, serve, and keep him company. The couple is placed in the Garden of Eden and warned not to eat the particular fruit. As when the Egyptians eat the "flesh and fluid" of the patroness of sexual pleasure and reproduction, Adam and Eve by eating become aware of their sexual nature and grow modest. The Levite myth makes Eve accept the serpent's advice and eat first. Having Yahweh speak directly to the serpent and put "enmity" between him and the woman and their respective offspring effectively bans the oracular tradition and transforms women from wise counselors into silent and ignored beings.

By eating the fruit first, Eve gains "sexual consciousness" and knows how to tempt Adam to follow suit. Hebrew men are thereby warned to avoid seductresses in the pagan temples, which is crucial if patrilineal descent is to prevail. Hebrew women, who appear to continue the old ways, are warned to change. The sexual drive is not a natural biological means to help the species reproduce itself, but a one-sided sin: women are at fault. For this, she is condemned to give birth painfully, forcing every woman to identify with Eve. The male deity finally decrees Eve must desire only her husband. For defying the male deity, woman is forever to be ruled and dominated and must submit obediently. Once male kinship is established in a post-Eden world where humans must labor for their livelihood, women become economic slaves.

Hebrew males still bless God daily for not making them women. Muhammad claims Satan rejoices when Eve is created. Christians treat women as passive, inferior, carnal beings, citing the Paradise myth as proof. St. Paul writes much about women's inferiority to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Timothy, blinding himself even to the biological truth that females give birth to males. St. Peter in Anatolia calls Goddess worship a "defiling passion" and lectures women to be holy as of old, subjecting themselves to their husbands. St. Clement, an early Roman father, orders women to spin, weave, and cook rather than take part in physical sports. St. John Chrysostom in the fifth century forbids women to teach, since a teaching woman once spoiled everything, while St. Augustine claims woman is incomplete without man, but man is complete alone. Martin Luther later asserts men must maintain power, being superior, John Calvin declares political equality for women a "deviation" and favors polygamy to prevent unwed and childless women, and Hubmaier claims Adam eats unwillingly so as not to "vex" his rib, Eve.

Witch-hunts continue the suppression, with women the usual victims. Isis is known in England during the Roman period, and the Goddess Danu in Ireland may be related to Diana of Rome, Dione of Greece, and even Danu of India; wicked women serving Satan ride with Diana by night over vast distances. The story of Eve is used in the sixteenth century to justify killing women who defy the church—they are formed from an imperfect, "bent" rib. Witchcraft comes from carnal lust resulting when women are not "chaste and subservient". These precepts rule down to the current generation's parents and grandparents as inherent parts of family life. They must now be questioned and examined, for they continue to oppress women in secular society.



In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the church is a greater obstacle to female autonomy than today, so the first women to speak out require courage. Mary Wollstonecraft points out that the Eve story is an ancient but unbelievable attempt to justify male domination and critiques Rousseau's *Emile* for making wives and daughters subservient in matters of religion. In 1838, Sarah Grimke asks whether womankind has not suffered enough to atone for Eve's supposed transgression. Women speak out against their own oppression after being silenced for protesting black slavery. After being sequestered in silence at an international abolition conference, women gather in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848 to draft a Women's Declaration of Independence. Males react self-righteously, armed with the Bible's final word on the subject. Elizabeth Cady Stanton asks how young Hebrews can honor their mothers as commanded when the whole drift of scripture is that womankind is contemptible. In the nineteenth century, British law prevents woman from suing for divorce, leaving the house, and refusing "conjugal rights". Both church and state oppose Annie Besant's 1876 call for contraception. In 1853, Abby Foster notes that by controlling the minds of mothers, ministers teach children second-hand. In 1860, Susan B. Anthony notes that women from the time of Moses have been treated like property.

To protect male supremacy, the church leads the fight against suffrage, and when women gain the right to vote, they have only males to vote for. The current women's liberation movement fights a culture "impregnated with the mythology of the ancient Hebrews", particularly the "eternal Eve". Contemporary male Christians are "the most splendid of God's creatures", a "supreme perfection", at odds with the wickedness of women. Simone de Beauvoir speaks sarcastically the convenience of a male god providing males evident advantages by endorsing the codes that males write. The question of the ordination of women in the Anglican/Episcopalian church leads to predictions that it will be the "death knell of the appeal of the Church for men", and declarations that God chooses masculinity for Christ. Meanwhile, Catholic sisters accuse the male-dominated church of placing women in the same category as children and imbeciles. The church's power is weakening in areas where community life and pressure are low, but it clings to male exclusivity. An English bishop uses past experience with "nature religions" to warn against adapting too readily in "a sex obsessed culture".

Even the non-religious should be concerned over how the church continues wielding power on sexual double-standards, illegitimacy, abortion, contraception, rape, social and economic roles (including the basic assumption that men naturally are breadwinners and protectors). Many values are so ingrained as to be almost instinctive. Knowing about the early female religions helps prevent such ignorance, but is hindered by censorship from general education and denied in popular literature. Even in scholarly circles, goddesses are still often just "obese, naked fertility figures" set up by men. The truth has been hidden too long. Historical and political perspective allows the idea of "natural or divinely ordained" sex roles to be refuted. Silencing and debilitating women economically makes no more sense than killing of defiant consorts. Only by women and men sharing ideas respectfully and honor all life can humanity become a "truly civilized species".





# Characters

## Abraham

The Hebrew prophet of the male deity Yahweh, Abraham appears in Canaan (Palestine) between 1800 and 1550 BCE, well within the time of the arrival of Indo-Europeans in the Middle East. Genesis says Abraham lives at "Ur of the Chaldees" near Eridu, but thereafter refers to Harran as his country. Abraham's relatives are named Na Hor and Haran. During a famine, Abraham and his beautiful wife Sarah go to Egypt, where the Pharaoh takes her into his harem. Abraham sends to Harran to find a daughter for his son Isaac, while son Esau marries two wives, a Hittite and a Horite, and settles among the Horites. Later, according to the Bible, Hittite becomes a term of rebuke, suggesting Sarah or Abraham's mother (whose name is omitted in Genesis) is Indo-European. Abraham's family is buried in land owned by Ephron the Hittite.

## Ashtoreth (a.k.a. Astarte, Ishtar, and Aphrodite)

Ashtoreth is worshiped widely in the Mediterranean region and is known for the priestesses who incarnate her, performing sacred sexual functions. For this "transgression", the editors of the Hebrew Bible deliberately misspell her name, refer to her as a male, and have her name pronounced as "boeth" (abomination). They inevitably pair her with the male Baal, who in other mythologies is much weaker than she. Scholars note that Ashtoreth and Yahweh are worshiped side-by-side in Jerusalem and Shiloh.

## Joseph Campbell

A mythologist who, in 1960, points out the oddity of turning the obviously contrived and counterfeit myth of Adam and Even into history and building upon it an entire misogynist civilization.

## Ezekiel

One of the major Hebrew prophets, Ezekiel is a reformer-priest from whose long book Merlin Stone selects a few verses upon which to comment. Ezekiel hypothesizes that Hebrew women pick up debauchery and lewdness in Egypt. He describes two sisters, Oholah and Oholibah, who behave lewdly in Egypt and must have their houses burned to make them stop. Ezekiel sees a vision of a mysterious figure at the Temple gate in Jerusalem who tells of "filthy things" going on inside. Ezekiel sees images on the walls and idols, rituals involving asherah branches, and women weeping for Tammuz. Ezekiel consistently uses the term "son of man" to remind readers they are not to consider themselves sons of women (many exegetes would debate Stone's simplistic explanation). Yahweh orders Ezekiel to prophecy against the women who "make up



prophecies out of their own heads"—a slap at Goddess worship—and orders him to mark the foreheads of men in Jerusalem who commit abominations so they can be utterly destroyed.

## Sir James Frazer

A nineteenth/twentieth century anthropologist best known for his monumental twelve volume *The Golden Bough*, Frazer is a favorite source for Merlin Stone in talking about myths, rituals, and how early Christianity might be influenced by Goddess worship.

## The Great Goddess

Known in various languages by various names—Anat, Anahita, Anaitis, Ashera, Ashtart, Ashtoreth, Astarte, Attoret, Attar, Au Set, Cybele, Hathor Inanna, Innin, Ishara, Istar, Isis, Nana, and Nut—the Great Goddess is throughout the Middle East the Queen of Heaven. In various languages she is called "Queen of Heaven", "Lady of the High Place", "Celestial Ruler", "Lady of the Universe", "Sovereign of the Heavens", "Lioness of the Sacred Assembly", and "Her Holiness", but all refer to the same female deity rather than many deities. In Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* (second century CE), the Goddess speaks of herself as "Nature", manifesting herself in various gods and goddesses, controlling the world, worshiped under countless names. She describes how various peoples have referred to her. Her proper name is "Queen Isis". The Judeo-Christian tradition reduces Ashtoreth to the status of a male false god.

## Hammurabi

The sixth king of Babylon, Hammurabi extends his empire to Mesopotamia, but is most associated with one of the first written law codes. Archaeologists have now found earlier ones, but none dates from before the Northern invasions and the beginning decline in Goddess-worship. Merlin Stone cites Hammurabi's Code to contrast with the Levite legislation in the Bible. Hammurabi shows Babylonian women retaining independence consistent with matriarchal descent. They own possessions that husbands can use but which revert to them in case of widowhood or divorce; they can acquire property, take legal action, enter contracts, and share in their husband's inheritance. Women who do not want to be responsible for their husband's premarital debts may receive a written document to this effect. Hammurabi's laws describe inheritance rights of temple priestesses, suggesting that the question is in flux.

## Hosea

One of the "minor" Hebrew prophets, Hosea describes his wife Gomer behaving as a *qadishtu* in order to demean her actions and equate them with rebellious Israel's. This is in line with the Levites establishing a controlling code of sexual morality for women,



which condemns the ancient ways of the Goddess as orgiastic, evil, shameful, and sinful. The biblical text is confusing, when Yahweh is ranting about Israel not being willing to turn from its evil ways and when Hosea is describing his freedom-loving wife.

## Jezebel

The Queen of Israel, Jezebel in the Hebrew Scriptures is the "epitome and symbol of the treacherously evil woman", although her only crime is refusing to abandon her parents' religion for that of Yahweh. She is framed for the murder of her husband, King Ahab, and gruesomely murdered by Jehu. The details are told in full as a warning to other "treacherous" women. The motives of the executioner become questionable when he claims Jezebel's throne—and promptly appears to pay homage to Ashtoreth and Baal in order to assemble their followers so they can be slain. Yahweh declares Jehu has done well. Clearly, Jezebel's murder is "a political assault upon the religion of the Goddess". In 842 BCE, Jezebel's daughter Athalia claims the throne of Judah as her own, and people may consider it her right through matrilineal descent from her mother Jezebel.

## Yahweh

More commonly known as Jehovah, Yahweh is the male deity of the Hebrews, who arrives in Palestine with his first prophet, Abraham, thousands of years after worship of female deities is established throughout the Middle East. In the Sinai desert, Yahweh has Moses separate the Levites from the other tribes to serve as priests, to be richly supported through the offerings they are required to give Yahweh. As the Hebrews near the "promised land" of Canaan, Yahweh orders them to destroy the existing religion and occupy the territory through bloody sieges, and then begins through his prophets to threaten destruction for forsaking him and worshipping Ashtoreth/Baal. Whole towns are massacred to end assimilation to surrounding culture, but Goddess religion continues.

The Hebrews preserve memory of a mythic battle between Yahweh and the serpent Leviathan in the Psalms, but replace it in Genesis with the politically-motivated legend of Adam and Eve. Psalm 74 sounds much like the Marduk legend and other text from Ugarit, where Indo-European rulers are on good terms with Hittite kings. Long before Baal has a temple of his own, he and Yahweh may have been the same deity, for Ugaritan descriptions closely resemble Psalms 92 and 104. Indo-European male deities live on glowing mountains, like Mount Horeb, at whose foot the Hebrews tremble and beg Moses to speak with Yahweh on their behalf. Moses reminds them later that they see no figure on the mountain, but only hear a voice, and how he grinds the "pagan" calf they make in his absence into dust and casts it into the torrent that flows down the mountain. The Psalms show Yahweh heaping coals on the wicked, consuming them with fire, blazing like fire, lighting up the world, and causing mountains to melt like wax. Yahweh is Sanskrit means "everflowing", suggesting volcanism; this may better explain the name Yahweh than hunting for Semitic meanings.

## The Young-God

Known in various languages by various names—Attis, Adonis, Baal, Damuzi, Osiris, or Tammuz—the Young-God is found throughout the Middle East as the son or brother of the Great Goddess whom she also takes as her lover and consort. The Young-God's death inspires annual lamentations among devotees of the Goddess. Eunuch priests become common in Sumer, Babylon, Canaan, and especially in Anatolia where they call themselves "Attis". Imitating the son/lover and shedding their maleness is the price males pay to infiltrate the priesthood. As patrilineal tribes become dominant, ritual regicide disappears and male deities bestow the right to rule to male kings.



# Objects/Places

## Anatolia

The Asian part of modern Turkey, Anatolia is from Neolithic times home to the Great Goddess. When the Indo-Europeans invade in the late fourth/early third century BCE, they blend with the Hatti natives, and become known as the Hittites. The vanguard is aggressive warriors and a priestly caste, which then rule the indigenous peoples, to whom they feel culturally superior. The invasions are as much religious crusades as territorial conquests. Another Indo-European group, the Luvians, live directly south of the Hittites in Cilicia. Little is known about them beyond that they sweep destructively over western Anatolia ca. 2300 BCE, and speak a language related to Hittite. In Roman times, St. Peter preaches in Anatolia against the "defiling passion" of Goddess worship and lectures women to be holy as of old, subjecting themselves to their husbands.

## Babylon

The kingdom forms ca. 1900 BCE when the Akkadians supplant the Sumerians culturally and politically. Babylon adopts the Akkadian language but keeps the Sumerian Goddess worship. By 1600 BCE, the Kassites, ruled by Northern invaders, gain control of Babylon and female deities give way to males, as Marduk murders Tiamat. Babylonian women retain some independence, as is seen in the Code of Hammurabi, the sixth king of Babylon, who extends the empire to Mesopotamia. Babylonian women own possessions that husbands can use, but which revert to them in case of widowhood or divorce; they can acquire property, take legal action, enter contracts, and share in their husband's inheritance. As late as the eighth century BCE, Babylonian women still serve as judges and magistrates, and some priestesses act as oracles, providing military and political advice to royalty, but they are admittedly fewer than male oracles.

## Canaan

The region encompassing Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, and Syria, Canaan is center to Neolithic societies that worship the Goddess. Adath, the "Important Lady of the Royal House", rules in Ugarit in northern Canaan in the fourteenth century BCE. Even after the Northern invasion ca. 2000 BCE by Hittite armies, women's status is not greatly diminished, as they act in official capacities among the Ammonites. The Hittites and Egyptians battle regularly for control of Canaan, but it goes instead to the Hebrews, bearers of a new morality that demands virginity until marriage for all women and fidelity of wives to husbands—both on threat of death. Baal comes to be the male consort of the Goddess in Canaan and the consort of Ashtoreth after the time of Moses.

The Hebrews have buried their dead in Canaan at the time of Abraham, but then go into Egypt, whence they are led out by Moses and told to dispossess the old inhabitants for



committing "abominations" and "sexual license". Yahweh blesses bloody massacres and then divides Canaan among the tribes. The Levites live among them and regularly—and violently—attack the Goddess religion that tempts many away. Scholars note that Ashtoreth and Yahweh are worshiped side-by-side in Jerusalem and Shiloh. The esteem paid to the Serpent Goddess in Canaan results in Her practices being carried to great distances, for Phoenicians sail as far as the British Isles in pre-Roman times, and earlier "Sea People", including the Philistines, travel widely and establish settlements.

## Egypt

The ancient civilization of northeastern Africa, Egypt is identified with the Goddess Isis and her weaker brother/husband Osiris. In prehistoric times, Egypt is divided into Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) kingdoms, worshipping the Goddess under different names and using different symbols. Indo-Europeans invade ca. 3000 BCE, uniting the kingdoms for the first time. By the late fourth millennium BCE, the "Followers of Horus" rule Egypt as a "master race", with Memphis as their capital. Around the time of the Second Dynasty, Heliopolis (Annu) becomes home to a school of priest-scribes who worship a sun god, Ra. By the Fifth Dynasty, Ra and Horus are equated. Egyptian and Hittite armies often clash for control of Canaan and there is considerable intermarriage during the eighteenth Dynasty.

Canaan, however, goes to the Hebrews, who come to Egypt to avoid starvation when Joseph receives authority there, thanks to his ability to interpret dreams. Thereafter, the Hebrews become slaves, and Moses as a baby is adopted as an infant by the pharaoh's daughter. Moses leads them across the Sinai Peninsula and seizes Canaan from the various inhabitants. In the time of the Hebrew reformer-priest Ezekiel, Egypt becomes a symbol of debauchery and lewdness. In a Hebrew colony in Egypt, émigré women claim to have prospered at home until they give up offering incense and libations to the Queen of Heaven; now they are destitute; they do not plan on stopping the offerings again—and they have their husbands' approval.

## Greece

Pre-Hellenic Greece sends to the island of Crete an Indo-European culture which adopts local Minoan culture and returns via the "Sea People" to the mainland. Scholars term this blended culture "Mycenae". The Achaean invasions (thirteenth century BCE) weaken the ancient matrilineal tradition, and the Dorians make patrilineal succession normative. The Northerners introduce the worship of Dyaus Pitar ("God Father") who becomes Zeus. The myth of Hera's failed struggle against Zeus may reflect the revolutionary cultural conflict. Myths of Aphrodite and Adonis survive in Greece, despite Indo-European disapproval.



## Hittites

Indo-European invaders of Anatolia (modern Turkey), the Hittites form an "exclusive caste" over the Hattians, who are smaller physically and lack the Hittites' horse-drawn war chariots and iron weapons. Triumphant easily, the Hittites impose draconian laws, but allow various Hatti goddesses to coexist with their own mountain storm gods. That the Hittite queen serves as high priestess suggests the early kings gain legitimacy by marrying Hattian priestesses, retaining the old shrines, and assuming the high priesthood personally. Hittite armies often clash with the Egyptians, vying for control of Canaan, and there is considerable intermarriage between the two regions. Genesis contains many references to the Hittites, including Abraham buying a burial plot in Canaan, but later in the Bible, Hittite becomes a term of rebuke.

## Levites

A priestly caste, the Levites are responsible for the writing and editing of the Hebrew Scriptures, ca. 1000-600 BCE, and remain in power at the time the Qumran literature is produced. The Levites invent a new morality that demands virginity until marriage for all women and fidelity of wives to husbands—both on threat of death. They distort the common Middle Eastern images of sacred serpent and fruit to make their Creation story an effective weapon against lingering Goddess religion. The books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy describe Levite rituals in detail, including how the other tribes support their lavish lifestyle. Because they enjoy all offerings made to Yahweh, the Levites have no patrimony in Canaan, but are allocated forty-eight towns and surrounding fields within the eleven tribal areas. Levites alone have access to the Law of Moses to interpret, censor, or change it. While much of the Bible may be based on historical events, the Levite reports on "pagan" religion are biased and subjective. They fail to obscure the ancient worship of the female deity as elsewhere in the Middle East.

## Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia designates the land "between the rivers" Tigris and Euphrates in what is now Iraq. In antiquity, it is ruled by Sumer and Babylon. In Sumerian hymns, females precede males. Gilgamesh credits the invention of writing to a woman. The Sumerian Queen of Heaven, Inanna, is powerful and omnipotent, but over thirteen centuries evolves into the grieving Ishtar. Northern "battle ax cultures" make their way to Mesopotamia soon after 2000 BCE, transforming society into patrilineal descent patterns. The sixth king of Babylon, Hammurabi, who extends his empire to Mesopotamia, is most associated with one of the first written law codes.

## Northern Invaders

Also known as Indo-Europeans, Indo-Iranians, Indo-Aryans, and Aryans, the Northern Invaders are "battle ax cultures" who leave no record of when or why they choose a



male deity. They enter history when they encounter the Goddess-worshippers of the Middle East. They may have been nomadic hunters-fishers, or perhaps they were shepherds beginning to practice agriculture when they leave their homelands in Russia and the Caucasus region.

## Sumer

The earliest known Middle Eastern culture, Sumer denotes people who speak a language akin to Ural-Altaiic tongues north and west of the Caspian Sea, which is used liturgically throughout the region. A vast literature is created in Sumerian by invading Northerners using Sumerian cuneiform writing, 2000-1800 BCE. This includes the Gilgamesh legends, which credits the invention of writing to a woman. The Sumerian Queen of Heaven, Inanna, is powerful and omnipotent, but over thirteen centuries evolves into the grieving Ishtar. By 1900 BCE, the Akkadians supplant the Sumerians culturally and politically to form Babylon. The Sumerian religion survives, however. Ubaidians leave Sumer for Egypt as newer groups are entering, and assume control of Egyptian society.

Genesis 2:6 and the legend of the Sumerian Paradise, Dilmun, both show a newly created world that lacks vegetation until water is brought up from the earth. Early Sumerian myths show male and female deities taking part in heavenly decision making, probably reflecting the societies that write the legends. In Sumer, the elective position of "king" becomes hereditary but remains partial. Sacred women are found in the earlier Sumerian records, esteeming the Queen of Heaven who, in turn, protects them.





# Themes

## Bias

Merlin Stone deals at great length in *When God Was a Woman* with the operation and result of bias. Western civilization continues to be biased against women. At the time the book is written (1976), the women's movement is on the verge of experiencing male backlash, with Fundamentalists citing God's will as expressed in the Bible as sufficient reason for limiting women's economic opportunities. Stone shows this as a continuing operation over the several centuries brave women have dared to protest. Christians and Muslims have incorporated the ancient Hebrew biases and develop them in their own characteristic ways, even justifying violence against women for alleged witchcraft and other "crimes".

Modern scholars have done little to alleviate the problem, as most share the dominant viewpoint, and either gloss over or purposefully corrupt the reality of Goddess worship in the ancient Middle East. This robs the educational system of any ability to correct biases and prejudices that have become rooted in Western thought and are accepted as truth simply because everyone accepts it. Consider how the Bible treats the Philistines as the treacherous, evil, barbarous, and culturally deficient, while archeology shows them to be transmitters of cultures to distant lands predating the Phoenicians, whose achievements are generally considered remarkable. Likewise, Jezebel has become the "epitome and symbol of the treacherously evil woman" for preserving her parents' religion, and her murderer is remembered as a hero, even though he treacherously massacred hundreds.

The root of the problem is the fact that the authors and later editors of the Bible are a well-fed, comfortable elite determined to "spin" the facts to their benefit. They take familiar mythological elements from the Middle Eastern milieu and twist them to support their image of a patrilineal society in which every female is closely controlled by one given male. Women are stripped of any economic security because the male deity declares that their first representative Eve defies him and seduces her mate into following suit. The pain of childbirth becomes a reminder to every women of her personal part in the guilt. Likewise, racial genocide in Canaan is shown to be ordered and blessed by Yahweh, suggesting that the oppressed slaves from Egypt are simply taking over a "promised land".

## Justice

Justice is much flouted as a cornerstone of Western civilization, but in *When God Was a Woman* it appears to be far more important and observed in the ancient Middle East than in subsequent times. Merlin Stone repeatedly compares the Code of Hammurabi and other ancient law codes with the Law of Moses in how women are treated. When the Goddess rules, women act in official capacities, appear as parties in civil litigation,



even against fathers and husbands, and hold real estate and lend money. As late as the fourth century BCE, women can choose and divorce husbands. Men who marry a new woman after a first wife gives birth are expelled and disinherited; men returning from war to find their wives have born another man's child are expected to accept her back.

The Levites during the time of Moses are the first to demand virginity until marriage for all women and total fidelity of wives to husbands—both on threat of death. Even rape is not excused. Virgins who are raped must marry the rapist, while married or betrothed victims are killed for having been raped, and the rapist too is stoned. Only if she is assaulted too far out in the countryside for her cries to be heard is she spared. Scholars excuse the social and legal treatment of Hebrew women by saying they must bear many sons. Therefore, divorce is forbidden to them, they are their husbands' possession and can be sold, daughters inherit only in the absence of a male heir, female vows are void without father or husband's consent, and there are no female clergy. This is found in no other Middle Eastern legal system. Hebrew males are allowed several wives, each of whom is expected to be totally faithful to him. Only if a man infringes on another man's property by making love to his wife or fiancée is he at fault. These unjust "moral" attitudes continue to this day.

The ultimate injustice is found in the fact that faithful wives face the harrowing prospects of losing their husband's favor and being sent out of his house with a simple "bill of divorcement". Males own everything and wives, despite age, health, and efforts to build up the value of the household, have no legal rights or claim on anything. Another wife or two can simply replace them, they having become "nearly worthless as marriage material". There are no records to show how frequently this happens, but it is likely that having the laws on the books frightens women into become submissive, obedient servants.

## Sex

Sex lies at the center of *When God Was a Woman* and permeates every page. Before humans understand the relationship between coitus and reproduction, names and property naturally descend through the female line and the Goddess is worshiped as the source of life. At the dawn of agriculture, the Goddess is credited with its invention, which means she not only gives life, but reliably sustains it. As animal husbandry spreads, humans discover male responsibility for reproduction, and a new theology develops—when and how is not known—that sometimes coexists with the Great Goddess, but turns her gradually into a consort to a male God, or directly compete, creating mythologies in which the male kills the female. One solution has the Egyptian God Ptah simply masturbate to produce the rest of the pantheon, thus eliminating any need for a Divine Ancestress.

For two centuries, Western scholars have ethnocentrically and subjectively been labeling as temple or ritual prostitutes women who live in the temple precincts and have sex with males who come to worship the Goddess. In Akkadian they are called "qadishtu", denoting sanctification or holiness. They esteem the Queen of Heaven and



she in turn protects them. At Erech, they are known as "spotless". They often come from wealthy families and their children inherit their names, titles, and property; many daughters become qadishtu. Herodotus (ca. 450 BCE) describes remnants of these early customs in Babylon, where women make love to a stranger for their first sexual experience and thereafter have sex only with their husbands. In Corinth ca. 150 CE, Lucian finds strangers are taken as lovers only on the fast day of Adonis.

From the time of the earliest Indo-European conquests, laws are promulgated about the inheritance, property, business, legal, and economic rights of the qadishtu, but do not oppose the sexual customs themselves. This honor falls to the Levites at the time of Moses, as they demand virginity until marriage for all women and total fidelity of wives to husbands—both on threat of death. Even rape is not excused. The reason for this is the need for clear paternity, which is clearly impossible for the qadishtu. The Levites' telling of the Creation myth makes sexual awareness the original sin. This prejudice continues in Christian rites of marriage, whereby people lacking the "gift of continency" manage to remain "undefiled". The sexual drive ceases to be viewed as a natural biological means of reproducing the species and a means of economically enslaving all women who are ordered to submit obediently to their husbands. Males, of course, are not restricted sexually. Post-biblical Hebrew mythology turns the maiden Lilith, who gathers men into the Goddess' temple, first into Adam's first wife, who refuses to be sexually submissive, and later into a demon waiting to find spilled sperm to create "illegitimate demon children".



# Style

## Perspective

Merlin Stone is a sculptor and university-level teacher of art and art history, who becomes interested in archeology and ancient religions, and spends ten years researching *When God Was a Woman*. Stone asks in the Preface how males originally gain control and continue to regulate everything in the world, and what impact has teaching generations of children that a male deity creates the universe and man, and—incidentally—produces from him and for him a woman, who gets them thrown out of paradise? How does this formative myth, so destructive to the struggle of women to achieve equal status in society, originate?

Stone learns that the Goddess is worshiped from at least Neolithic times (7000 BCE), whereas the Judeo-Christian Yahweh reveals himself to Abraham between 1800-1550 BCE. What is life like for women in a society that worships a wise and valiant female creator? How does this contrast with the myth of Eve causing the loss of Paradise and putting the burden on women ever after? The Introduction makes clear that Stone is not writing a book of archeology or history; she is revealing what male archeologists and theologians have suppressed about the Goddess.

Stone writes for general readers, primarily female, intending to arm them to oppose the established myths that keep women subservient. Fundamentalists undoubtedly will dismiss her arguments, but those with open minds will find her on the whole convincing and will empathize with her goals.

## Tone

The tone of *When God Was a Woman* is polemical. Merlin Stone is angry that, since the time of Moses, women have been told that the omnipotent male deity Yahweh, through his male priesthood, has used a carefully crafted tale about the fall of humanity as a means of economic control. The story claims to be history—and has been accepted as such by Jews and Christians (and through the Qur'anic version by Muslims as well) and has become embedded in secular Western civilization. The final paragraph, an impassioned plea to "reason together", and opening paragraphs pleading for young girls not to be burdened with a bewildering guilt over Eve's supposed actions, clarify why Stone spends ten years studying diverse ancient texts and artifacts to demonstrate that for millennia before the Mosaic "revelations" a radically different worldview exists over much of the face of the earth. An open-minded reader will at least ponder the facts she puts forth with seeming objectivity. Fundamentalists will likely reject them out-of-hand or stop reading.

Stone's polemics at times rise to the level that even the open-minded might object. She is wont to speculate rather subjectively about the effects of Goddess rituals on the



formation of Christianity, but is careful to note when she is merely speculating. She is also quite bitter of the success of the Levite writers of the Bible and the Christians who perfect their anti-feminist arguments, but by the time she concentrates on these themes, she has built a powerful case for the hypocrisy of the male-dominated Judeo-Christian establishment. She also somewhat weakens her over-all case by reiterating arguments in full rather than simply pointing out that she has already considered them at length. This probably comes from technically being an "amateur" in the field. Stone is quick to note that she is not writing an academic textbook of history of archeology, but is making available sources that professional historians, archeologists, and theologians overlook or consciously suppress. For this alone, this rich and detailed book is valuable.

## Structure

Merlin Stone's *When God Was a Woman* consists of a Preface explaining why she has written the book; a methodological Introduction; eleven numbered and titled chapters which make up the body of the book; Date Charts, Bibliography, and Index. It includes four maps and twenty-one illustrations. The chapters are: 1. "Tales with a Point of View", 2. "Who Was She?" 3. "Women - Where Woman Was Deified", 4. "The Northern Invaders", 5. "One of Their Own Race", 6. "If the King Did Not Weep", 7. "The Sacred Sexual Customs", 8. "They Offered Incense to the Queen of Heaven", 9. "And the Men of the City Shall Stone Her with Stones", 10. "Unraveling the Myth of Adam and Eve", and 11. "The Daughters of Eve".

Stone assumes the educational system has denied readers access to the materials with which she deals and so begins by laying out how widespread matrilineal societies worshiping the Goddess are worldwide in antiquity and in spots today. Their myths share in common with Genesis tales that have a point of view. Concentrating on the Middle East because that is where the dominant male-dominated religions are born, Stone examines Goddess myths and the effect on societies. Stone next introduces evidence that invaders from Eurasia introduce a male deity, patrilineal social patterns, and an overpowering military culture to the Middle East.

Having established the most ancient patterns and the "opposition", Stone concentrates on how the Hebrew Levites systematically and often brutally battle against the old Goddess religion but never manage to root it out. She examines many sections of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) to show how the Levites are dealing with the Goddess religion, often obfuscating and twisting its essence. Finally, Stone concentrates on the myth of Adam and Eve, showing how every detail helps enslave women economically and psychologically. The final chapter surveys far too quickly how brave women since the eighteenth century fight to break down the inequality. Much space is given to the Anglican/Episcopalian angst about ordaining women, reflecting the mid-1970s. It now rings quaint.

The early chapters are heavy, detailed, and somewhat confusing, because Stone assumes her readers know nothing besides the Adam and Eve myth. By Chapter 5, Stone has laid out the facts and is looking at trends in various regions, comparing and

contrasting, and helping the reader appreciate why she is saying what she is. The concluding polemics are the weakest part of the book, but useful facts continue to emerge through the end.



## Quotes

"Upon closer scrutiny, however, it becomes clear that so many of the names used in diverse areas were simply various titles of the Great Goddess, epithets such as Queen of Heaven, Lady of the High Place, Celestial Ruler, Lady of the Universe, Sovereign of the Heavens, Lioness of the Sacred Assembly or simply Her Holiness. Often the name of the town or city was added, which made the name even more specific. We are not, however, confronting a confusing myriad of deities, but a variety of titles resulting from diverse languages and dialects, yet each referring to a most similar female divinity. Once gaining this broader and more overall view, it becomes evident that the female deity in the Near and Middle East was revered as Goddess—much as people today think of God." Chap. 2, p. 22

"Each of these is an example of the theory that the sex of the deity is determined by a previously existing dominance of one sex over the other - in the case of the Goddess, the higher position of women in the family and in society. Alongside these theories there have been reams of pseudo-poetic material about the deification of the female as the symbol of fertility - by the male - the awe of the magic of her ability to produce a child supposedly making her the object of his worship." Chap. 3, p. 31

"I might add that according to Hebrew law a woman had no right to money or property upon divorce and since her vow was invalid, presumably she could not engage in business. Perhaps the most shocking laws of all were those that declared that a woman was to be stoned or burned to death for losing her virginity before marriage, a factor never before mentioned in other law codes of the Near East, and that, upon being the victim of rape, a single woman was forced to marry the rapist; if she was already betrothed or married she was to be stoned to death for having been raped." Chap. 3, p. 56

"As the name of Horus was assimilated into the Goddess religion, as the son of Isis, the priests of Memphis proposed another concept of the great father god. This time his name was Ptah, curiously like the Sanskrit Pitar. The texts concerning him describe the creation of all existence, suggesting that Ptah was there first. This time we are told that it was through an act of masturbation that Ptah caused all the other gods to come into being, thus totally eliminating the need for a divine ancestress." Chap. 4, p. 91

"Professor Gordon has long pointed out the close relationship between the Indo-Europeans and the Hebrew peoples in terms of literature, linguistics, and custom. Though he does not present as close a relationship as the one I am suggesting, he does say, 'We can no surmise why it was the Hebrews and Greeks who first emerged as the historians of the west. Both of them started their historiographic careers on Hittite substratum.'" Chap. 5, p. 108

"The material is derived from three separate lines of evidence. The first includes the accounts of the actual ceremonies, which describe the marriage of the consort to the priestess, providing him with the position later defined as kingship; the second, the



documents of ritual, which in historic times came to be used as a substitute for the original sacrifice: human substitutes, assault, effigies and animal sacrifice. The third, the most detailed descriptions, are provided by the legends, which probably accompanied these substitute rituals; these, at the proper ceremonial moment, offering the theological explanation of the symbolic action taken." Chap. 6, pp. 136-137

"The Anatolian myth of the Goddess Inara revealed that once a man slept with the Goddess (presumably the high priestess), he might never again sleep with another woman, for fear that he would transfer the sacred powers of the Goddess to her. One Attis legend explained his voluntary castration as a reaction to his fear of being unfaithful to the Goddess. If the consort was not allowed to have sexual relations with anyone after he had been with the high priestess, castration may have been the solution that at first allowed him to remain alive." Chap. 6, p. 148

"People today, raised and programmed on the 'morality' of the contemporary male religions, may find the ancient sexual attitudes and customs disturbing, shocking, or even sacrilegious. Yet we should consider the likelihood that such judgments or reactions are the result of the teaching and conditioning of religious attitudes present in our society, which are themselves based on the ideologies of those who initially and repetitively condemned the sexual customs of the Goddess.

"In the worship of the female deity, sex was Her gift to humanity. It was sacred and holy. She was the Goddess of Sexual Love and Procreation. But in the religions of today we find an almost totally reversed attitude. Sex, especially non-marital sex, is considered to be somewhat naughty, dirty, even sinful." Chap. 7, pp. 154-155

"[I]t was the symbolism and customs of the religion of the Goddess that were actually the target of Hebrew aggression. It appears more than likely that the Levite priests, just as they purposefully misspelled and mispronounced Her name (reciting it as bosest, meaning shame), and referring to Her only in the masculine gender, refused to even recognize the position of the Goddess, doing this by continually linking Her name with that of Her male consort." Chap. 8, p. 166

"Let us take a closer look at the tale of creation and the subsequent loss of Paradise as related by the Hebrew leaders and later adopted and cherished by the advocates of Christianity. As we compare the Levite creation story with accounts of the Goddess religion, we notice how at each turn, in each sentence of the biblical myth, the original tenets of the Goddess religion were attacked." Chap. 10, p. 219

"We may find ourselves wondering to what degree the suppression of women's rites has actually been the suppression of women's rights." Chap. 11, p. 228

"Killing off a defiant consort was not the answer, any more than silencing and debilitating women economically has been. Perhaps when women and men bite that apple - or fig - at the same time, learn to consider each other's ideas and opinions with respect, and regard the world and its riches as a place that belongs to every living being on it, we can begin to say we have become a truly civilized species." Chap. 11, p. 241





## Topics for Discussion

How does the coming of agriculture promote Goddess worship?

How does the "Young-God" evolve under the influence of Indo-European thought?

How do ancestor worship and a female kinship system contribute to belief in a Goddess?

How do women fare in the Code of Hammurabi as compared with the Law of Moses?

What parallels does Merlin Stone find between the Brahmins and the Levites? Do you find them convincing?

How do Sumerian creation myths compare with those in Genesis? How do you account for the differences?

Why are the Levites so insistent on patrilineal descent? How do they seek to enforce it?

What characteristics of the Indo-European male gods are found in the Hebrew descriptions of Yahweh?