

אַשְׁרָה

Strong's Concordance

Asherah: a Phoenician goddess, also an image of the same

Original Word: אַשְׁרָה

Part of Speech: Proper Name Feminine

Transliteration: Asherah

Phonetic Spelling: (ash-ay-raw')

Short Definition: Asherim

<http://biblehub.com/hebrew/842.htm>

Astarte

אַשְׁרָה

<http://www.morfix.co.il/en/%D7%90%D6%B2%D7%A9%D6%B5%D7%81%D7%A8%D6%B8%D7%94>

Asherah

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Asherah (/ˈæʃərə/; Ugaritic: 𐎠𐎵𐎲𐎠 𐎠𐎵𐎲𐎠 𐎠𐎵𐎲𐎠 𐎠𐎵𐎲𐎠 : **'trt**; Hebrew: **אֲשֵׁרָה**), in Semitic mythology, is a mother goddess who appears in a number of ancient sources. She appears in Akkadian writings by the name of **Ashratum/Ashratu**, and in Hittite as **Asherdu(s)** or **Ashertu(s)** or **Aserdu(s)** or **Asertu(s)**. Asherah is generally considered identical with the Ugaritic goddess **'Aṯirat**.

Asherah is identified as the consort of the Sumerian god Anu and Ugaritic El,^[1] the oldest deities of their respective pantheons.^{[2][3]} This role gave her a similarly high rank in the Ugaritic pantheon.^[4] The name *Dione*, which like *'Elat* means "Goddess", is clearly associated with Asherah in the *Phoenician History* of Sanchuniathon, because the same common epithet (*'Elat*) of "the Goddess par excellence" was used to describe her at Ugarit.^[5] The Book of Jeremiah, written circa 628 BC, possibly refers to Asherah when it uses the title "Queen of Heaven", stating: "pray thou not for this people...the children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven, and to pour out drink offerings to other gods, that they may provoke me to anger."(Hebrew: **לְמַלְכַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם**) in Jer 7:18 and Jer 44:17–19, 25.^[6] (For a discussion of "Queen of Heaven" in the Hebrew Bible, see Queen of Heaven.)

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In Ugarit

Asherah

אֲשֵׁרָה

Goddess of motherhood and fertility

Lady of the Sea



Major cult center	Middle-East <i>Formerly Jerusalem</i>
Symbol	Asherah pole
Consort	El (Ugaritic religion) Elkunirsa (Hittite religion) Yahweh (ancient Israelite religion)
Offspring	70 sons (Ugaritic religion) 77 or 88 sons (Hittite religion)

In the Ugaritic texts (before 1200 BCE) Athirat is almost always given her full title *rbt 'atrt ym, rabat 'Aṭirat yammi*, 'Lady Athirat of the Sea' or as more fully translated 'she who treads on the sea' (Ugaritic: 𐎠𐎡𐎠𐎢𐎠𐎢𐎠𐎢𐎠𐎢𐎠𐎢𐎠).

This occurs 12 times in the Baʿal Epic alone.^[7] The name is understood by various translators and commentators to be from the Ugaritic root *'atrt* 'stride', cognate with the Hebrew root *'šr*, of the same meaning.

Her other main divine epithet was "*qaniyatu 'ilhm*" (Ugaritic: 𐎧𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢 : *qnyt 'lm*) which may be translated as "the creatrix of the Gods (Elohim)".^[7]

In those texts, Athirat is the consort of the god El; there is one reference to the 70 sons of Athirat, presumably the same as the 70 sons of El. She is clearly distinguished from ʿAshtart (better known in English as Astarte or Ashtoreth in the Bible) in the Ugaritic documents although in non-Ugaritic sources from later periods the distinction between the two goddesses can be blurred; either as a result of scribal error or through possible syncretism. In any case, the two names begin with different consonants in the Semitic languages; Athirat/Asherah (Ugaritic: 𐎠𐎡𐎠𐎢𐎠𐎢𐎠𐎢𐎠𐎢𐎠𐎢𐎠 : *atrt*) with an *aleph* or glottal stop consonant ʾ and ʿAshtart/Ashtoreth (Ugaritic: 𐎠𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢 : *ttrt*) with an *ʾayin* or voiced pharyngeal consonant ʾ), indicating the lack of any plausible etymological connection between the names.

She is also called **Elat** (Ugaritic: 𐎠𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢 : *ilt*) ("Goddess", the feminine form of El; compare Allat) and **Qodesh**, 'holiness' (Ugaritic: 𐎧𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢𐎢 : *qdš*). Athirat in Akkadian texts appears as Ashratum (Antu), the wife of Anu, the God of Heaven. In contrast, Ashtart is believed to be linked to the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar who is sometimes portrayed as the daughter of Anu while in Ugaritic myth, Ashtart is one of the daughters of El, the West Semitic counterpart of Anu.

Among the Hittites this goddess appears as Asherdu(s) or Asertu(s), the consort of Elkunirsa ("El the Creator of Earth") and mother of either 77 or 88 sons.

Among the Amarna letters a King of the Amorites is named Abdi-Ashirta, "Servant of Asherah".^[8]

In Egypt

In Egypt, beginning in the 18th dynasty, a Semitic goddess named Qudshu ('Holiness') begins to appear prominently, equated with the native Egyptian goddess Hathor. Some think this is Athirat/Ashratu under her Ugaritic name. This Qudshu seems not to be either ʿAshtart or ʿAnat as both those goddesses appear under their own names and with quite different iconography and appear in at least one pictorial representation along with qudshu.

But in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman periods in Egypt there was a strong tendency towards syncretism of goddesses and Athirat/Ashrtum then seems to have disappeared, at least as a prominent Goddess under a recognizable name.

In Israel and Judah

Between the 10th century BC and the beginning of their exile in 586 BC, polytheism was normal throughout Israel;^[9] it was only after the exile that worship of Yahweh alone became established, and possibly only as late as the time of the Maccabees (2nd century BC) that monotheism became universal among Jews.^{[10][11]} Some biblical scholars believe that Asherah at one time was worshiped as the consort of Yahweh, the national God of

Israel.^{[10][12][13]} There are references to the worship of numerous gods throughout Kings, Solomon builds temples to many gods and Josiah is reported as cutting down the statues of Asherah in the temple Solomon built for Yahweh. Josiah's grandfather Manasseh had erected this statue. (2 Kings 21:7) Further evidence includes, for example, an 8th-century combination of iconography and inscriptions discovered at Kuntillet Ajrud in the northern Sinai desert^[14] where a storage jar shows three anthropomorphic figures and an inscription that refers to "Yahweh ... and his Asherah".^{[15][16]} The inscriptions found invoke not only Yahweh but El and Baal, and two include the phrases "Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah" and "Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah."^[17] There is general agreement that Yahweh is being invoked in connection with Samaria (capital of the kingdom of Israel) and Teman (in Edom); this suggests that Yahweh had a temple in Samaria, and raises a question over the relationship between Yahweh and Kaus, the national god of Edom.^[18] The "Asherah" is most likely a cultic object, although the relationship of this object (a stylised tree perhaps) to Yahweh and to the goddess Asherah, consort of El, is unclear.^[18] It has been suggested that the Israelites might consider Asherah as a consort of Baal due to the anti-Asherah ideology which was influenced by the Deuteronomistic History at the later period of Monarchy.^[19] In another inscription called "Yahweh and his Asherah", there appears a cow feeding it's calf.^{[20]:163} If Asherah is to be associated with Hathor/Qudshu, it can then be assumed that the cow is what's being referred to as Asherah.

Further evidence includes the many female figurines unearthed in ancient Israel, supporting the view that Asherah functioned as a goddess and consort of Yahweh and was worshiped as the Queen of Heaven.^[15]

Asherah poles, which were sacred trees or poles, are mentioned many times in the Bible.

Ashira in Arabia

A stele, now at the Louvre, discovered by Charles Huber in 1883 in the ancient oasis of Tema (modern Tayma – Arabic: تيماء), northwestern Arabia, and believed to date to the time of Nabonidus's retirement there in 549 BC, bears an inscription in Aramaic which mentions Ṣalm of Maḥram and Shingala and Ashira as the gods of Tema.

This Ashira might be Athirat/Asherah. Since Aramaic has no way to indicate Arabic *th*, corresponding to the Ugaritic *th* (phonetically written as *t̪*), if this is the same deity, it is not clear whether the name would be an Arabian reflex of the Ugaritic *Athirat* or a later borrowing of the Hebrew/Canaanite *Asherah*.^[21]

The Arabic root *'tr* is similar in meaning to the Hebrew indicating "to tread" used as a basis to explain the name of Ashira as "lady of the sea", specially that the Arabic root *ymm* also means "sea".^[22] It has also been recently suggested that the goddess name Athirat might be derived from the passive participle form, referring to 'one followed by (the gods),' that is, 'pro-genitress or originatress', corresponding with Asherah's image as 'the mother of the gods' in Ugaritic literature.^[23]

See also

- *The Hebrew Goddess*
- Khirbet el-Qom



Wikimedia Commons has media related to *Asherah*.

Notes

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7. ^ ^a ^b Gibson, J C L; Driver, G R (1978), *Canaanite myths and legends*, T. & T. Clark, ISBN 9780567023513
8. ^ Noted by Raphael Patai, "The Goddess Asherah", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* **24**.1/2 (1965:37–52) p. 39.
9. ^ Finkelstein, Israel, and Silberman, Neil Asher, *The Bible Unearthed: Archaeology's New Vision of Ancient Israel and the Origin of Its Sacred Texts*, Simon & Schuster, 2002, pp. 241–42.
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15. ^ ^a ^b Dever 2005
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External links

■ Asherah

- Asphodel P. Long, *The Goddess in Judaism – An Historical Perspective* (http://www.asphodel-long.com/html/goddess_in_judaism.html)
- *Asherah, the Tree of Life and the Menorah* (<http://www.asphodel-long.com/html/asherah.html>)
- *Jewish Encyclopedia: Asherah* (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=1942&letter=A&search=Asherah>)
- Rabbi Jill Hammer, *An Altar of Earth: Reflections on Jews, Goddesses and the Zohar* (http://www.zeek.net/spirit_0407.shtml)
- University of Birmingham: Deryn Guest: Asherah (<http://web.archive.org/web/20060916100221/http://www.theology.bham.ac.uk/guest/Ancient+Israel/asherah.htm>) at Archive.org
- Lilinah biti-Anat, *Qadash Kinahnu Deity Temple "Room One, Major Canaanite Deities"* (<http://web.archive.org/web/20091026224544/http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/Lofts/2938/majdei.html>)

■ Kuntillet inscriptions

- Jacques Berlinerblau, "Official religion and popular religion in pre-Exilic ancient Israel" (<http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/berlinerblau5.htm>) (Commentary on Yahweh's Asherah.)
- ANE: Kuntillet bibliography (http://www.ancientneareast.net/kuntillet_ajrud.html)
- Jeffrey H. Tigay, "A Second Temple Parallel to the Blessings from Kuntillet Ajrud" (University of Pennsylvania) (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jwst/second.htm>) (This equates Asherah with *an* asherah.)

■ Israelite Religion

- David Steinberg, *Israelite Religion to Judaism: the Evolution of the Religion of Israel* (http://www.adath-shalom.ca/israelite_religion.htm)

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Categories: Ancient Israel and Judah | Fertility goddesses | Deities in the Hebrew Bible

| Levantine mythology | Mother goddesses | West Semitic goddesses | Phoenician mythology

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Queen of heaven (antiquity)

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(Redirected from Queen of Heaven (antiquity))

Queen of Heaven was a title given to a number of ancient sky goddesses in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, in particular Anat, Isis, Inanna, Astarte, Hera and possibly Asherah (by the prophet Jeremiah). Elsewhere, Nordic Frigg also bore this title. In Greco-Roman times Hera, and her Roman aspect Juno bore this title. Forms and content of worship varied. In modern times, the title Queen of Heaven is used by Catholics and Orthodox Christians for Mary.

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A statue of Isis nursing her son, housed in the Louvre

Isis

Isis was venerated first in Egypt. As per the Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the fifth century BCE, Isis was the only goddess worshiped by all Egyptians alike,^[1] and whose influence was so widespread by that point, that she had become completely syncretic with the Greek goddess Demeter.^[2] It is after the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the Great, and the Hellenization of the Egyptian culture initiated by Ptolemy I Soter, that she eventually became known as 'Queen of Heaven'.^[3] Lucius Apuleius confirmed this in Book 11, Chap 47 of his novel known as *The Golden Ass*, in which his character prayed to the "Queen of Heaven". The passage says that the goddess herself responded to his prayer, in which she explicitly identified herself as both the Queen of Heaven and Isis.

Then with a weeping countenance, I made this orison to the puissant Goddess, saying: O blessed Queen of Heaven...



Apuleius wrote about the Queen of Heaven, referring to Queen Isis

Thus the divine shape breathing out the pleasant spice of fertile Arabia, disdained not with her divine voice to utter these words unto me: Behold Lucius I am come, thy weeping and prayers has moved me to succor thee. I am she that is the natural mother of all things, mistress and governess of all the elements, the initial progeny of worlds, chief of powers divine, Queen of Heaven... and the

Egyptians which are excellent in all kind of ancient doctrine, and by their proper ceremonies accustomed to worship me, do call me Queen Isis.^[4]

Inanna

Inanna was the Sumerian Goddess of love and war. Despite her association with mating and fertility of humans and animals, Inanna was not a mother goddess, and is rarely associated with childbirth.^[5] Inanna was also associated with rain and storms and with the planet Venus.^[6]

Queen of Heaven is a title used for goddesses central to many religions of antiquity. Inanna's name is commonly derived from *Nin-anna* "Queen of Heaven" (from Sumerian NIN "lady", AN "sky"),^[7] although the cuneiform sign for her name (Borger 2003 nr. 153, U+12239 𒌆) is not historically a ligature of the two. In some traditions Inanna was said to be a granddaughter of the creator goddess Nammu or Namma.. These difficulties have led some early Assyriologists to suggest that Inanna may have been originally a Proto-Euphratean goddess, possibly related to the Hurrian mother goddess Hannahannah, accepted only latterly into the Sumerian pantheon, an idea supported by her youthfulness, and that, unlike the other Sumerian divinities, she at first had no sphere of responsibilities.^[8] The view that there was a Proto-Euphratean substrate language in Southern Iraq before Sumerian is not widely accepted by modern Assyriologists.^[9] In Sumer Inanna was hailed as "Queen of Heaven" in the 3rd millennium BC. In Akkad to the north, she was worshipped later as Ishtar. In the Sumerian *Descent of Inanna*, when Inanna is challenged at the outermost gates of the underworld, she replies

I am Inanna, Queen of Heaven,
On my way to the East.

Her cult was deeply embedded in Mesopotamia and among the Canaanites to the west.

Astarte

The goddess, the Queen of Heaven, whose worship Jeremiah so vehemently opposed, may have been possibly Astarte. Astarte is the name of a goddess as known from Northwestern Semitic regions, cognate in name, origin and functions with the goddess Ishtar in Mesopotamian texts. Another transliteration is *'Ashtart*; other names for the goddess include Hebrew עַשְׁתָּרֶת (transliterated *Ashtoreth*), Ugaritic *'ttrt* (also *'Aṯtart* or *'Athtart*, transliterated *Atirat*), Akkadian ^D*As-tar-tú* (also *Astartu*) and Etruscan *Uni-Astre* (Pyrgi Tablets).

According to scholar Mark S. Smith, Astarte may be the Iron Age (after 1200 BC) incarnation of the Bronze Age (to 1200 BC) Asherah.^[10]

Astarte was connected with fertility, sexuality, and war. Her symbols were the lion, the horse, the sphinx, the dove, and a star within a circle indicating the planet Venus. Pictorial representations often show her naked. Astarte was accepted by the Greeks under the name of Aphrodite. The island of Cyprus, one of Astarte's greatest faith centers, supplied the name Cypris as Aphrodite's most common byname. Asherah was worshipped



The Ishtar Gate refers to Ishtar previously known as Innana



Astarte riding in a chariot with four branches protruding from roof, on the reverse of a Julia Maesa coin from Sidon

in ancient Israel as the consort of El and in Judah as the consort of Yahweh and Queen of Heaven (the Hebrews baked small cakes for her festival).^[11]

"Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem? The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger." ^[12]

"... to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem ..." ^[13]

Hebrew Bible references

Worship of a "Queen of Heaven" (Hebrew מַלְכַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם, *Malkath haShamayim*) is recorded in the Book of Jeremiah, in the context of the Prophet condemning such religious worship as blasphemy and a violation of the teachings of the God of Israel. In Jeremiah 7:18:

The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes of bread for the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to provoke me to anger.^[14]

In Jeremiah 44:15-18:

Then all the men who knew that their wives were burning incense to other gods, along with all the women who were present—a large assembly—and all the people living in Lower and Upper Egypt, said to Jeremiah, "We will not listen to the message you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD! We will certainly do everything we said we would: We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and will pour out drink offerings to her just as we and our fathers, our kings and our officials did in the towns of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. At that time we had plenty of food and were well off and suffered no harm. But ever since we stopped burning incense to the Queen of Heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have had nothing and have been perishing by sword and famine."^[15]

It should be remembered in this context that there was a temple of Yahweh in Egypt at that time that was central to the Jewish community at Elephantine in which Yahweh was worshipped in conjunction with the goddess Anath (also named in the temple papyri as Anath-Bethel and Anath-Iahu).^[16]

The goddesses Asherah, Anath and Astarte first appear as distinct and separate deities in the tablets discovered in the ruins of the library of Ugarit (modern Ras Shamra, Syria). Some biblical scholars tend to regard these

goddesses as one, especially under the title "Queen of heaven".

John Day states that "there is nothing in first-millennium BC texts that singles out Asherah as 'Queen of Heaven' or associates her particularly with the heavens at all."^[17]

See also

- Guan Yin, commonly known in the West as the Goddess of Mercy
- Heavenly Mother
- Mother Nature
- Nuit (Thelema), Nut (Egyptian sky goddess)
- Sacred prostitution

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