

~SACRED POLE (250)

[Hebrew, *'ashe-rah'*]

.. The Sacred Poles

.. Asherah

- The Hebrew word *'ashe-rah'*, plural *'ashe-rim'*, is thought to refer to (1) a sacred pole representing Asherah, a Canaanite goddess of fertility.
- And it came about during that night that Yehowah went on to say to him; Take the young bull, the bull that belongs to your father, that is, the second young bull of seven years, and you must tear down the altar of Baal that is your fathers, and the **sacred pole** that is by it you should cut down. (Judges 6:25)
- And you must build an altar to Yehowah your God at the head of this stronghold, with the row of stones, and you must take the second young bull and offer it up as a burnt offering on the pieces of wood of the **sacred pole** that you will cut down. (Judges 6:26)
- And (2) the goddess Asherah herself.
- Only they did not depart from the sin of the house of Jeroboam, with which he caused Israel to sin. In it he walked, and even the **sacred pole** itself stood in Samaria. (2 Kings 13:6) Footnote
- However, it is not always possible to determine whether a particular scripture is to be understood as referring to the idolatrous object or to the goddess.
- A number of modern Bible translations, though, have rendered the original-language word as **sacred pole(s)**, or posts but transliterated it when the reference is apparently to the goddess. **AT, JB**
- Others have not endeavored to make a distinction but have simply transliterated the Hebrew word, **RS**, or have consistently translated it **sacred pole(s)**.**NW** In the older translations of the Bible, the Hebrew word has usually been rendered as, **grove(s)**.**KJ, LE** But this rendering is inappropriate in such texts as;
- So the sons of Israel did what was bad in Yehowah's eyes, and

they were forgetful of Yehowah their God and went serving the Baals and the **sacred poles**. (**Judges 3:7**)

- Furthermore, he brought out the **sacred pole** from the house of Yehowah to the outskirts of Jerusalem, to the torrent valley of Kidron, and burned it in the torrent valley of Kidron and ground it to dust and cast its dust upon the burial place of the sons of the people. (**2 Kings 23:6**)
- Which speak of serving, **groves** and bringing out the, **grove** from the temple at Jerusalem.

•• The Sacred Poles

- The **sacred poles** apparently stood upright and were made of wood, or at least contained wood, the Israelites being commanded to cut them down and **to burn them**.
- But their altars you people are to pull down, and their **sacred pillars** you are to shatter, and their **sacred poles** you are to cut down. (**Exodus 34:13**)
- And you must pull down their altars and shatter their **sacred pillars**, and you should burn their **sacred poles** in the fire and cut down the graven images of their gods, and you must destroy their names from that place. (**Deuteronomy 12:3**)
- They may have simply been **uncarved poles**, perhaps even trees in some instances, for God's people were instructed;
- You must not plant for yourself any sort of tree as a **sacred pole** near the altar of Yehowah your God that you will make for yourself. (**Deuteronomy 16:21**)
- Both Israel and Judah disregarded God's express command not to set up **sacred pillars** and **sacred poles**, they placed them upon every high hill and under every luxuriant tree alongside the altars used for sacrifice.
- It has been suggested that the **poles** represented the female principle, whereas the **pillars** represented the male principle. These appendages of idolatry, likely phallic symbols, were associated with grossly immoral sex orgies, as is indicated by the reference to male prostitutes being in the land as early as Rehoboam's reign.

- And Judah went on doing what was bad in the eyes of Yehowah, so that they incited him to jealousy more than all that their forefathers had done by their sins with which they sinned. (**1 Kings 14:22**)
- And they too kept building for themselves high places and **sacred pillars** and **sacred poles** upon every high hill and under every luxuriant tree. (**1 Kings 14:23**)
- And even the male temple prostitute proved to be in the land. They acted according to all the detestable things of the nations whom Yehowah had driven out from before the sons of Israel. (**1 Kings 14:24**)
- And they kept setting up for themselves **sacred pillars** and **sacred poles** upon every high hill and under every luxuriant tree. (**2 Kings 17:10**)
- Only seldom did kings such as Hezekiah, and Josiah, come along, who removed the high places and broke the **sacred pillars** to pieces and cut down the **sacred pole**.
- He it was that removed the high places and broke the **sacred pillars** to pieces and cut down the **sacred pole** and crushed to pieces the copper serpent that Moses had made, for down to those days the sons of Israel had continually been making sacrificial smoke to it, and it used to be called the copper serpent-idol. (**2 Kings 18:4**)
- He even went pulling down the altars and the **sacred poles**, and the graven images he crushed and reduced to powder, and all the incense stands he cut down in all the land of Israel, after which he returned to Jerusalem. (**2 Chronicles 34:7**)

•• Asherah

- The **Ras Shamra** texts identify this goddess as the wife of the god El, the Creator of Creatures, and refer to her as Lady Asherah of the Sea and Progenitress of the God's, this also making her the mother of Baal.
- However, there apparently was considerable overlapping in the roles of the three prominent goddesses of Baalism, Anath, Asherah,

and Ashtoreth, as may be observed in extra-Biblical sources as well as in the Scriptural record. While Ashtoreth appears to have figured as the wife of Baal, Asherah may also have been so viewed.

- During the period of the Judges, it is noted that the apostate Israelites went serving the Baals and the **sacred poles**, the Asherim.
- So the sons of Israel did what was bad in Yehowah's eyes, and they were forgetful of Yehowah their God and went serving the Baals and the **sacred poles**. (**Judges 3:7**) Footnote
- Thus they abandoned Yehowah and took up serving Baal and the Ashtoreth images. (**Judges 2:13**)
- The mention of these deities in the plural may indicate that each locality had its Baal and Asherah.
- And it came about during that night that Yehowah went on to say to him; Take the young bull, the bull that belongs to your father, that is, the second young bull of seven years, and you must tear down the altar of Baal that is your fathers, and the **sacred pole** that is by it you should cut down. (**Judges 6:25**)
- Jezebel, the Sidonian wife of Ahab the king of Israel, entertained at her table 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the **sacred pole**, or Asherah.
- And now send, collect together all Israel to me at Mount Carmel and also the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of the **sacred pole**, who are eating at the table of Jezebel. (**1 Kings 18:19**)
- The degraded worship of Asherah came to be practiced in the very temple of Yehowah. King Manasseh even placed there a carved image of the **sacred pole**, evidently a representation of the goddess Asherah.
- Further, he put the carved image of the **sacred pole** that he had made in the house of which Yehowah had said to David and to Solomon his son; In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I shall put my name to time indefinite. (**2 Kings 21:7**)

- **Manasseh was disciplined by being taken captive to Babylon and, upon his returning to Jerusalem, showed he had profited from that discipline and cleansed Yehowah's house of idolatrous appendages. However, his son Amon resumed the degrading worship of Baal and Asherah, with its accompanying ceremonial prostitution.**
- **Finally Yehowah brought against them the chiefs of the army that belonged to the king of Assyria, and so they captured Manasseh in the hollows and bound him with two fetters of copper and took him to Babylon. (2 Chronicles 33:11)**
- **And as soon as it caused him distress, he softened the face of Yehowah his God and kept humbling himself greatly because of the God of his forefathers. (2 Chronicles 33:12)**
- **And he kept praying to Him, so that He let himself be entreated by him and He heard his request for favor and restored him to Jerusalem to his kingship, and Manasseh came to know that Yehowah is the true God. (2 Chronicles 33:13)**
- **And he proceeded to remove the foreign gods and the idol image from the house of Yehowah and all the altars that he had built in the mountain of the house of Yehowah and in Jerusalem and then had them thrown outside the city. (2 Chronicles 33:15)**
- **Twenty-two years old was Amon when he began to reign, and for two years he reigned in Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 33:21)**
- **And he proceeded to do what was bad in Yehowah's eyes, just as Manasseh his father had done, and to all the graven images that Manasseh his father had made Amon sacrificed, and he continued serving them. (2 Chronicles 33:22)**
- **And he did not humble himself because of Yehowah the same as Manasseh his father humbled himself, for Amon was one that made guiltiness increase. (2 Chronicles 33:23)**
- **This made it necessary for righteous King Josiah, who succeeded Amon to the throne, to pull down the houses of the male temple prostitutes that were in the house of Yehowah, where the women were weaving tent shrines for the **sacred pole**.**
- **And the king went on to command Hilkiah the High Priest and the priests of the second rank and the doorkeepers to bring out from**

- the temple of Yehowah all the utensils made for Baal and for the **sacred pole** and for all the army of the heavens. Then he burned them outside Jerusalem on the terraces of Kidron, and he brought the dust of them to Bethel. (**2 Kings 23:4**)
- And he put out of business the foreign-god priests, whom the kings of Judah had put in that they might make sacrificial smoke on the high places in the cities of Judah and the surroundings of Jerusalem, and also those making sacrificial smoke to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations of the zodiac and to all the army of the heavens. (**2 Kings 23:5**)
 - Furthermore, he brought out the **sacred pole** from the house of Yehowah to the outskirts of Jerusalem, to the torrent valley of Kidron, and burned it in the torrent valley of Kidron and ground it to dust and cast its dust upon the burial place of the sons of the people. (**2 Kings 23:6**)
 - Further, he pulled down the houses of the male temple prostitutes that were in the house of Yehowah, where the women were weaving tent shrines for the **sacred pole**. (**2 Kings 23:7**)