JEZEBEL: THE MIDDLE ROAD LESS TAKEN

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Abstract

The Biblical Jezebel has been 'reclaimed' by feminists and 'denounced' by fundamentalists (at Jezebel's time known as 'passionate' Yahweh adherents) for nearly three millennia. These contrasting extremes often lack a judicious assessment of the evidence. By utilising texts and archaeology, this thesis takes a ‘middle road’ by looking at powerful women (mortal or semi-divine) and goddesses contemporary to Jezebel. This approach assists our understanding of Israelite laws, which were often restrictive and xenophobic (especially towards women, adornment and polytheism). That our view of Jezebel is so negative largely derives from the way these laws portrayed Jezebel and other feisty and flamboyant women like her.
Declaration

This is to certify that:

i. The thesis comprises only my original work towards the Masters except where indicated in the preface,

ii. Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other materials used,

iii. The thesis is less than 50,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices as approved by the Research Higher Degrees Committee.

Signed: Date:
Figure 1: Map of the Ancient Near East (from Bible History Online 2013).
Figure 2: Approximate chronology of the reign of the House of Omri (from the California Institute for Ancient Studies 2013).
Preface

As an undergraduate I loved archaeology and history, in particular the cultural development of ancient Israel. I was not brought up in a religious household, being educated only in the basics of the New Testament and Genesis in the Old Testament; I had no knowledge of the rest of the Bible. It was only then that I was introduced to Jezebel, a most interesting woman, whom many declare a 'villain' of the Bible. She absolutely fascinated me. Here, within the pages of the Bible itself was a woman (if she did truly exist), a foreigner and a polytheist, accused by the Deuteronomistic authors of turning not only her husband, but an entire country to idolatry! It made me consider that this Phoenician queen must have wielded a substantial amount of power, thus creating a perceptible threat to Yahwism and consequently to the writers of the Bible. Yet, she was also a murderer and broke several of the Ten Commandments—a most interesting woman.

Many of the commentaries that involved Jezebel accused her of being a whore; in this context, not idolater but adulterer—a seductress prowling after a man called Jehu, her husband's murderer. This accusation against Jezebel was based on one simple line: "When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her eyes, and adorned her head and looked out the window" (2 Kings 9:30). The negative emphasis placed on this single passage—Jezebel is charged with adorning herself to seduce her husband's enemy, which greatly contrasts with other passages in which she demonstrates the love of her husband by murder—suggested to me that some research needed to take place into the significance of adornment within the pages of the Bible.

It was rather surprising to find that no 'middle road' of the study of Jezebel has ever been taken: it is always feminists versus biblical fundamentalists, firing their beliefs at one another, and often in a less than professional way.¹ I never agreed entirely with either faction. Further enquiry led me to the knowledge that there were indeed other powerful women, roughly contemporary with Jezebel, recorded in history and myth. Moreover, depending on the law codes of each of these women's countries, and whether or not they were wielding their power for the good of their husband and country, they would be either admired or condemned throughout history. Thus, with all these various subjects, ideas and negative and positive associations in mind, I began my research for this thesis.

¹ Feminists often admire her as hero, a powerful woman, and a role model, very often 'forgetting' she murdered in cold blood; whereas the fundamentalists place her in a category with Eve, Delilah, Herodias, etc., as causing the downfall of the Israelites, accusing her of being a whore and an idolatress. Specific examples will be throughout the thesis.
Acknowledgements

There are so many people that I would like to thank for their help, for putting up with my 'vague' moments and patiently steering me back on topic. Firstly, my principal supervisor Professor Tony Sagona; I don't know how to thank you, you have been so patient and helpful with my work, and you kept me motivated. You also gave me enough confidence to tutor—something that I still love to do. My secondary supervisor Professor Louise Hitchcock; you too helped me so much through the pitfalls of thesis writing and made me really think about the essence of my essay. You also opened my eyes to the joys of fieldwork. Heather Stone, my life saver, you have taught me the foibles of grammar, and gave me sound advice when needed. Abby Robinson; an absolutely fantastic person who offered to edit my essay "thank you so much" Lastly, to my university friends who offered to read my thesis: "Thank you".

Members of my family require special thanks: to my Dad, Peter, and sister, Tennille, for enduring me, and to my partner Dan, who has tolerated me, and has not once complained. You have been so supportive and often saved me with your computer expertise. THANK YOU!

Finally I would like to thank the most important person of all, my fantastic mother, Hilary, who passed away suddenly in October, 2013. Mum, you saw me through every stage of my university studies, and put up with a lot from me through the years—the moaning, the tears and the frustration, and late hours in the night, so thank you—this one is for you.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ii
DECLARATION iii
MAP OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST iv
HOUSE OF OMRI TIMELINE v
PREFACE vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vii
CONTENTS PAGE viii
LIST OF FIGURES AND ILLUSTRATIONS x
INTRODUCTION xi

1 JEZEBEL, INANNA AND POWERFUL WOMEN OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND THEIR CODES OF LAW 1

Evidence of Aha, Jezebel and Jehu 1
Jezebel's Role, Scripture and Religious Dogma Within the Bible 5
Women in Ancient Texts and Their Countries' Law Codes 8
Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian Laws 11
Egypt in Regards to Law 17
Phoenician Law 22
Hittite Law 24
Israelite Law 26

2 GODDESSES, MORTAL AND SEMI-MYTHIC WOMEN WITH POWER IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST 30

Inanna 32
Anat 36
Nitocris the Egyptian 41
Hatshepsut 42
Deborah and Jael of Israel 48
Queen Twosre 48
Dido of Phoenicia 49
Semiramis 50
Nitocris the Babylonian 53
Queen Rhodogune 54
Queen Vashti and Queen Esther 55

Conclusion 56

3 JEZEBEL: WHAT'S IN A NAME? A NARRATIVE OF JEZEBEL FROM THE BIBLE WITH COMMENTARY, AND HER HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATION TO THE BIBLICAL HARLOT 57

Archaeological Evidence 58
Evidence of Phoenician Trade During Jezebel's Lifetime 60
Lists of Figures and Illustrations

Figure 1: Map of the Ancient Near East  iv
Figure 2: Thiele's Conventional Chart from 990 to 780 BCE  v
Figure 3: A Scene From the Black Obelisk Depicting Jehu  1
Figure 4: Kurkh Monolith (Stela of Shalmaneser III c. 852 BCE  2
Figure 5: Possible Seal of Jezebel?  4
Figure 6: Code of Hammurabi Stele  12
Figure 7: Nen-Kheft-Ka and Wife Nefer-shemes  20
Figure 8: Rehotep and Wife Nofret  20
Figure 9: Painting of Jezebel  57
Figure 10: Ancient Trading Routes of the Phoenicians and Greeks  59
Figure 11: Part of the Balawat Gate, Assyria  61
Figure 12: Cylinder Seal Depicting the Sacred Tree and the Gods  63
Figure 13: Phoenician Ivory Sphinx in the Egyptian Style  64
Figure 14: Phoenician Ivory Depicting Sacred Tree (Egyptian Style)  64
Figure 15: Phoenician Ivory Sphinx in the Egyptian Style  64
Figure 16: Panel with a Male Figure Grasping a Tree; Winged Sun Disc Above  64
Figure 17: Mount Carmel  74
Figure 18: Painting of Elijah's Prophecy of the Omri Dynasty  81
Figure 19: Painting of Child Murderer Athaliah  83
Figure 20: Map of Samaria

Figure 21: Map of Phoenicia and Their Commodities

Figure 22–25: Asherah/Astarte Plaques

Figure 26: Israelite Cult Stand with Musicians from Ashdod

Figure 27: Bronze Bull Statue from Dotham

Figure 28: Ta'anach Cult Stand

Figure 29: Bottom Register of Ta'anach Cult Stand

Figure 30: Grayscale Drawing of Ta'anach Cult Stand

Figure 31: Cultic Figures, Talismans etc. Excavated in Israel

Figures 32–35: Women in the Windows Plaques

Figures 36–38: Ishtar Votive Offering Houses

Figure 39: Bes Figurine/Amulet Late Iron Age

Figure 40: Protection Figurines/Amulets from Gath

Figure 41: Movie Poster of the 'Sins of Jezebel' (1953)

Figure 42: Selection of Ancient Near Eastern Venus Figurines
Introduction

"When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her eyes, and adorned her head and looked out the window" (2 Kings 9:30).

If Jezebel, princess of Sidon, priestess of Baal, Queen of Israel, did indeed once physically exist, and had she known that by the simple actions of painting her eyes, arranging/adorning her hair/head and looking out of the window, her name would be forevermore coupled intimately with the title, 'the whore', would she possibly have done things differently? If asked, most people would say that Jezebel is a name for a whore, or a woman who applies too much makeup, and thus looks cheap. 'Jezebel' was also a derogatory term used in the 19th century for African American women. These are just two of many meanings applied to 'Jezebel'. Her name has been adopted simultaneously for feminist magazines, lingerie lines and World War II missiles alike. Just one biblical line has sexualised this woman throughout history, tarnishing her name and character. She is one of the longest-lasting symbols of gender panic known to us from historical literature (one that has had notable force for millennia); she "cannot be killed," and is "constantly re-formed in the contemporary image of male desire and fear."

However, in the ancient Near East, there were other powerful women, roughly contemporary to Jezebel—typically queens; some real, some fictional—who have been praised in the textual records for their actions, which usually involved saving either their country's royal bloodline or religion. However, when analysing the law

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2 This thesis will be utilising the New King James version of the Bible.
3 Pippin 1994, 196; see also Morton 1991, 10; Quinby 1999, 113.
4 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 1. [http://prophetess.istc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
5 That is, the sense of alarm, consternation, and anger that results from the loss of male authority, which leads to the degradation of women whom take this authority; see Quinby 1999, 100.
codes of these women's countries, it becomes clear that many of them have a more positive attitude in regard to women and their rights in society than the law code of the Israelites did. It appears that women with power were constrained or liberated depending on the prevailing decrees. Also, it is worth mentioning here that few of these other women were denounced within the pages of the Bible for what could be considered somewhat 'disobedient' acts.

Unfortunately, through Jezebel, a single 'disobedient' individual came to embody both the entire female population of Israel and the 'other', and dangerous precedents were set. Jezebel was the wife of the Israelite king, Ahab, and has been demonised for centuries for her actions as recorded in the Bible. The biblical writer's antagonism stems primarily from Jezebel's Phoenician religion, and causing Ahab to tolerate Baal. An outsider and, worse, a Phoenician, the Bible narrates the story of her turning Ahab and God's people away from the true religion, in which Elijah, the prophet of God challenges Jezebel's prophets of Baal and Asherah (who eat at Jezebel's table) to a religious confrontation (in which Baal is defeated and the hearts of Israel are turned back to Yahweh) (1 Kings 18). Furthermore, she then murdered not only Elijah's protégés, but also an innocent man who refused to sell his family land to her husband. (1 Kings 21). Jezebel's final and most poignant scene is her 'adornment' for the 'seduction' of Jehu, the assassin of her son and husband, and her subsequent death, brought about when she is thrown out of a window by her traitorous eunuchs and eaten by the dogs of Jezreel (2 Kings 9:30–34).

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7 Which included women from other, neighbouring countries.
8 Oren 2009, 146.
9 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 2. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
10 The biblical authors had no love for the Phoenicians, as they were viewed as polytheists, sacrificers of children and people who lived life to excess, which will be addressed in subsequent chapters.
Called a whore, adulteress, prostitute, sorceress, witch, and many other names with negative sexual connotations, I will argue that Jezebel, like many other women of the Bible, has been unfairly tarred with the brush of the Deuteronomistic Historians, devout monotheists and men with an immense fear of foreigners, polytheism and women. For them, Jezebel embodied all these fears. Furthermore it can be argued that, even to the present day, the denunciation of certain women as 'Jezebels' attempts to constrain women's sexuality and restrict women from taking leading roles.

Devout monotheistic scholars—especially within the medieval period—utilised Jezebel's downfall and promoted her as a symbol for religious deviance, "doing evil in the eyes of the Lord" (1 Kings 16:19), predominantly by venerating foreign deities, and turning her husband's and Israel's heart to them. As a foreigner, a pagan and a woman with a powerful personality who controlled her husband and his affairs, she shattered the Israelite ideal of the private household's 'good wife' and transgressed into the public sphere of men. Jezebel's actions were not proper for an Israelite wife and had to be quashed lest a powerful precedent was set and this type of woman became accepted in society. These issues pertaining to Jezebel, whether or not she was a real historic character, must be addressed, and a 'middle road' needs to be taken to fairly ascertain both sides of her story, as these extremes (fundamentalist and feminist) often lack a judicious assessment of the evidence. Unfortunately, the only evidence we have comes from the single textual source which mentions her, the Bible, written centuries...

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11 The Deuteronomistic Historians are considered by most scholars to have been a movement or a school editing and redacting works around the seventh century BCE to highlight and embellish certain Israelite events in history and religious agenda. The books in the Bible to which their efforts apply encompass Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. For more in-depth information about the Deuteronomistic Historians' work and scholarly theories, see Campbell and O'Brian (2000).


13 Jezebel's narrative (a foreign woman marrying into vastly different society and their struggles to assimilate (or not)), although historically debatable, was and still is a very realistic theme, which has been drawn on by many, including Euripides in his play, Medea, to more recent biographies The White Masai by Hofmann (2007), and Married to a Bedouin by Van Geldermans (2010).
after her death (if she did indeed exist) which according to *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, was written by misogynistic men, for a misogynistic religion.\textsuperscript{14} But it bears constant reminding that although the Bible may come across as sexist to a present-day audience, it reflects what was the cultural norm of its authors; the majority of the literate were men who cloistered themselves in sacred institutions (only for men) and wrote religious dogma that reflected their ideals of women.\textsuperscript{15}

Much of the fundamentalist research\textsuperscript{16} on Jezebel pertains to her being branded as one of the 'bad girls' of the Bible. Among other notable biblical women pigeonholed into this category were Eve, Delilah, Herodias, Athaliah (Jezebel's child), Bathsheba, Vashti and Lot's wife. These women and their actions were found to be abhorrent by the original editors of the Bible, and in more recent times, the fundamentalists.\textsuperscript{17}

Their names have been blackened greatly throughout time, yet none suffered such a brutal death as Jezebel within the Bible:

They threw her down, and some of her blood spattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot. … they found nothing except her skull, her feet and her hands … On the plot of ground at Jezreel, dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh (2 Kings 9:33–36).

\textsuperscript{14} Parsons 2002, 98.

\textsuperscript{15} It is worth stating here that in subsequent chapters, that many kinds of religion ran concurrent with Yahwism in Judah. Examples such as household cults will be referred to; and in the eyes of Yahwists, these were a direct polemic against Yahweh's mandates. However, later the laws in the Book of Numbers and Deuteronomy do appear to have been embraced by the ancient Israelites, including their views on 'strange', 'other', 'outsider' women, the notion of adornment of women, and also the ideal of the 'good wife'. These laws can be seen now as restricting women's rights, but once again they should be viewed in the context of the cultural norms of the period. See Zevit 2001, 2002–3 and for a further in depth analysis on religious diversity in ancient Israel see Stavrakopoulou and Barton 2010.

\textsuperscript{16} Fundamentalism is a conservative theological movement, coined in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that demands a strict adherence to orthodox scripture and doctrines, and also believes these texts as literal; see Shavit and Eran (2007, 435–474).

\textsuperscript{17} Most of the works that are still utilised today in fundamentalist scholarship (I will clarify here that these works come from a very conservative standpoint, and what we are really focussing on is their particularly negative and sexist views on Jezebel) appeared in the early to mid-twentieth century. Some of the authors include Young (1960); Anderson (1967); Harrison (1969 reprinted 2004); Gehman (1970); Culver (1975) and Wiesel (1981). Additionally, many of these fundamentalists use Jezebel's 'spirit' as an example of 'evil', 'self-destructing' and 'volatile' behaviour; see also Sampson (2003); Clark (1998).
In contrast to the fundamental monotheists, feminist biblical scholars such as Athalya Brenner, Phyllis Bird and Merlin Stone\textsuperscript{18} argue that these 'bad girls' were women transgressing the norms of a tightly constrained society in which women were vessels for children, remained in private household spheres, and stood behind their husbands, who controlled every facet of their lives—especially their sexuality. They were to be seen and not heard. In Israel, particularly, there was also an obsessive fear and aversion to the 'other/outsider' which came to be embodied by most women, including prostitutes, widows (who had no option but to take on some of their deceased husbands' responsibilities in regards to family), spinsters, sorcerers/witches/wise women, pagans, priestesses and women from other surrounding countries. Biblical writers arguably felt threatened by these women, who infringed on their religion and ways of life. These women were not to be trusted, and many biblical prophets spoke at length, giving warnings to watch, avoid and be ever suspicious of these 'strange' people lest one became tempted by their 'impure' ways.

Jezebel has also been claimed by many to have solid connections to the 'monstrous-feminine'. Barbara Creed proposes that definitions of the monstrous-feminine are grounded in ancient religious and historical notions of 'abjection', some of which have come to fit Jezebel's profile.\textsuperscript{19} Creed's notions of 'abjection' can be seen in the context of Jezebel's apostasy (the worshipping of the Phoenician gods), and her actions within the Bible which are associated with sexual immorality and perversion, corporeal alteration, decay and death, human sacrifice, murder, the corpse, bodily wastes, the feminine body and incest.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19} Creed 1986, 69.
\textsuperscript{20} Creed 1986, 69.
Yet no claim of complete innocence can be made for Jezebel as a woman wronged by sexist authors of the Bible. She ordered the murder in cold blood of hundreds of prophets of God and cleverly orchestrated the killing of her neighbour Naboth to give Ahab the land which he desired. Thus, if we look at this through the eyes of the biblical writers, Jezebel broke several of the Ten Commandments, the foundations of law by which the majority of Israelites agreed to be bound. Jezebel through the passage of time has been accused of sexual immorality due to her 'supposed' seduction of the murderer of her husband, and the adornment of herself before death. Research on the negative standpoints on physical adornment within the Bible as they relate to Jezebel is minimal, usually restricted to a sentence or two stating that the Israelites preferred to restrict adornment to special occasions, and to do otherwise was to be linked to prostitution. This area is in dire need of research, as it is pivotal to understanding the way the Bible portrays Jezebel's adornment before death and her confrontation of Jehu, which has always been either understood in sexual terms or merely written off as wanting to 'go out in style'.

As previously mentioned, when Jezebel was killed by the eunuchs, her corpse was left to decay in the street and to be eaten by dogs. She was only buried later, as an afterthought, because she was a king's daughter. There is no mention of her being buried due to her status as a former queen of Israel or a 'Mother of the King'. To be left unburied in the ancient Near East was considered one of the most damnable punishments, saved only for perpetrators of the most horrendous crimes, such as witchcraft and sorcery, as it meant the spirit was never able to pass on to the other side, and the burial rites were never performed.

21 See Chapter Five.
22 For and in-depth analysis of biblical history, monotheism and sociology see Lang 1983.
23 See Chapters Four and Five.
In Jezebel scholarship, the two contrasting opinions are 1) that she was deceptive and wicked for worshipping foreign deities and murdering an innocent Israelite on behalf of her husband, or 2) that she was herself an innocent scapegoat for religious faithlessness amongst the Israelites and was denied her emancipation for centuries due to the prejudices of male authors. My research has found that no real 'middle road' has ever been taken;\textsuperscript{24} it seems that Jezebel is seen as a heroine by feminists and as a sexual villain by the fundamentalists. Her actions, strengths and weaknesses have been selectively exploited or conveniently omitted according to the point which the author is attempting to validate. Feminists either 'overlook and forget' the very real fact that Jezebel murdered in cold blood or claim it was her love for her husband which made her do it, that she was the 'perfect wife', providing for the wants and needs of her husband. Conversely, fundamentalists quite often 'forget' to mention that views on women in Jezebel's Phoenician homeland were quite positive and that women had more freedom in their lives there (and were not called 'whores' when they adorned themselves).

To attempt a 'middle road' on the subject of Jezebel, Firstly, an evaluation of why the Biblical author's condemn the queen must take place, and, secondly, the narrative must be reread from a vantage point that favours neither Jezebel nor the biblical author's. An attempt to find a 'middle road' in regard to the portrayal of the life of

\textsuperscript{24} The closest interpretations demonstrating equality to both sides of the Jezebel argument would be firstly, \textit{Music in the Old Bones: Jezebel Throughout the Ages} by Gaines (1999); however, this is somewhat biased towards the Israelite Queen, omitting quite a few important facts of her life, and makes very weak mention of the negative views of the everyday adornment of women in the Bible. Furthermore, some of Gaines' sources are questionable in regard to their scholarship. Gaines also really only touches upon the ancient and feminist texts—no archaeology or analysis of other Near Eastern countries. Her focus is only on Jezebel's image within the Bible. Secondly, Pippin (1994), touches on the lines in the Bible but focuses more so on the last 200 years of Jezebel scholarship. Although stating she is not taking sides, Pippin arguably does, however, lean towards the feminist agenda of re-evaluating and 'reclaiming' this 'bad woman' of the Bible.
Jezebel constitutes a primary objective of this thesis. She will be compared to various roughly contemporary powerful women from other countries, living under various law codes, some more flexible than others. Furthermore, an analysis of Jezebel's supposed links to prostitution, her sexuality and her adornment before death will be undertaken, bearing in mind that these were viewed negatively by the Deuteronomistic Historians, and also by the standards of Israelite Law. Additionally, the character of Jezebel (including the etymology of her name) evolved throughout Medieval times, attaining further negative connotations and which have been maintained to present day. The analysis of ancient texts, not just restricted to the Bible but also including other applicable Near Eastern materials,\textsuperscript{25} in conjunction with medieval and present-day works will be undertaken. In addition, what relevant archaeological evidence that is available from both Israel and other ancient Near Easter societies will be used for corroborat—something that has yet to be successfully applied in Jezebel scholarship. In summary, in order to find the 'middle road', throughout the following chapters literary texts, archaeology where applicable, and feminist and fundamentalist sources throughout the ages will be assessed. Ultimately, my aim is to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding of the woman who was once known, without the sexual overtones, as Jezebel: Phoenician Princess, Priestess of Baal, Israelite Queen and Queen Mother.

\textsuperscript{25} These are three primary sources for the history of law codes and powerful women in the ancient Near East: which mostly encompass Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian texts and will be analysed in Chapter Two. See Laughlin 2000, 121.
Chapter One:

Jezebel, Inanna and Powerful Women of the Ancient Near East and Their Codes of Law

Evidence of Ahab, Jezebel and Jehu

Jezebel's existence (if she did indeed exist) is only attested within the Hebrew Bible\(^1\) and, in later times, the Talmud; which is itself reliant on the Bible (c. 200/500 CE). The Hebrew Bible is best classified as a selective anthology, containing material written over a period of some 800 years, but completed late in the first millennium BCE.\(^2\) Archaeology provides ample material from the Iron Age II (c. 970–586 BCE), the period which encompasses Jezebel's existence in the ninth century. In regard to Jezebel's nemesis, Jehu, the 'Black Obelisk' depicts five scenes of tribute, with the second scene from the top portraying Jehu or possibly his ambassador. In Reference to Ahab, the Kurkh monolith inscription of Shalmaneser III,\(^3\) mentions "Ahab of Israel", some evidence that he could have indeed been a real historical person.\(^4\)

\[\text{Figure 3: A Scene from the Black Obelisk. Scholars believe that it is Jehu or his ambassador in proskenesis before Shalmaneser (from Kimberly 2010).}\]

\(^1\) The Hebrew Bible consists of the sacred writings of Judaism, and may be better recognised by its Christian name, the Old Testament.
\(^2\) Sperling 2005, 430–1.
\(^3\) Discovered in 1840 CE; see Walsh 2006, 5.
\(^4\) The campaign of year six, 853 BCE, mentions Ahab, king of Israel, as part of an anti-Assyrian coalition that confronted the Assyrians at Qarqar on the Orontes River in western Syria. According to the numbers of foot soldiers and chariots listed in the inscription, Ahab was one of the major partners in the coalition. See Wood 2011, 38–42.
Archaeological data is critically important, as there are relatively few texts from antiquity either written by women, or written by men about women, and the predominance of ancient male authors has created a deceptively masculinist perspective. But it must be remembered that this was the cultural norm of the time. Although the Bible is largely silent on the socio-religious leadership roles of women, we can learn much from archaeology about Iron Age households and the remnants of ancient eastern Mediterranean cultures.

Regarding the existence or not of Jezebel, there is a certain amount of archaeological data—not on Jezebel herself, but on her homeland, Phoenicia. More importantly, there are data related to Samaria, her marital home, and finally Jezreel, the location of Jezebel and her husband's winter palace and the setting of her gruesome death. The history of excavations in Samaria is lengthy and extensive. The first project, led by

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5 Nakhai 2009, xiv.
6 There are a few exceptions to this which will be discussed later within this chapter.
7 Nakhai 2009, 98.
George Reisner, took place between 1908 and 1910.\(^8\) It revealed the plan and the masonry of the Royal Israelite Palace. In the 1930s a joint expedition was mounted under the auspices of five archaeological institutions,\(^9\) headed by John Crowfoot. It included famous archaeologists such as Grace Crowfoot, Kathleen Kenyon and Eleazar Sukenik.\(^10\) Stunning ivory remains were excavated from the "palace he [Ahab] built and adorned with ivory" (1 Kings 22:39), and numerous books were published, listing the extensive finds.\(^11\) Samaria has been excavated almost to bedrock in the region of the palace. During the 1960s, further excavations, but on a smaller scale, took place under the direction of Fawzi Zayadine on behalf of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.\(^12\) Many foundations were excavated,\(^13\) which yielded even more delicate and intricate ivories.\(^14\)

Tel Aviv University professor David Ussishkin and John Woodhead, from the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, further excavated the site of Jezreel from 1990 to 1996,\(^15\) with surveys conducted in advance by Nehemia Zori and Manfred Oeming. Following development works, salvage excavations were carried out by Ora Yogev, Pinchas Porat, Oded Feder and Soshana Agadi on behalf of the Department of Antiquities.\(^16\) Fortified enclosures dating from King Omri (882–873 BCE), were also

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\(^8\) Reisner 1910, 248–63.  
\(^9\) For further information see: Crowfoot \textit{et al.} 1942.  
\(^10\) For further information about the finds of their excavations: J. and G. Crowfoot, 1938; see also Crowfoot \textit{et al.} 1935; Crowfoot \textit{et al.} 1942.  
\(^12\) Norma Franklin (2001, 107) has studied these masons’ marks with 73 marks incised on 72 limestone ashlars both from Megiddo and Samaria—which dated to the building period I, around the ninth century BCE Franklin’s paper concluded with two theories: that the masons' alphabetic marks were originally associated with the foreign "Sea Peoples", and that these craftsmen were originally hired, or as prisoners of war were subjugated to servitude as stonemasons (2001, 114).  
\(^13\) J. and G. Crowfoot 1938; see also Winter 1976 (a), 1976 (b).  
\(^14\) The winter palace and capital of Ahab and Jezebel, where the land was appropriated from the landholder Naboth by devious ways which will be discussed in Chapter Three.  
\(^15\) Ussishkin and Woodhead (2014, 19 November) have information on their 1990–95 project available online. [http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/archaeology/projects/proj_past_jezreel.html]
excavated, but only yielded poor domestic remains such as pots and jugs.\textsuperscript{17} A new project has recently been started, directed by field archaeologists Norma Franklin and Jennie Ebeling, who completed surveys in 2012,\textsuperscript{18} had their first season of excavating in 2013, and have just concluded their second season, with papers and articles to follow.\textsuperscript{19}

Although nothing has yet been discovered that soundly affirms Jezebel's existence in history, there is arguably one piece of evidence: a seal with the name YZBL—which can be read as 'Jezebel' in Hebrew—inscribed on it.

![Possible Seal of Jezebel? (from Korpel 2008)](image)

\textsuperscript{17} Ussishkin and Woodhead 2014, 19 November. [http://www.tau.ac.il/humanities/archaeology/projects/proj_past_jezreel.html]
\textsuperscript{18} A preliminary report by Ebeling, Franklin and Cipin (2012) highlights their work on the laser scans produced from their 2012 initial survey of Jezreel.
\textsuperscript{19} Franklin and Ebeling (2013, 10 October) have created a webpage for this project: http://www.jezreel-expedition.com/. Another website http://www.jezreelvalleyregionalproject.com/current-projects.html (excavating since 2010) looks more broadly at the Jezreel Valley, encompassing many different projects such as "Jezreel Valley in the Bible", with principal investigator Margaret Cohen. However, they are not exclusively researching one period, and work principally in the vicinity of Tel Megiddo (East).
The seal is large (3.17cm from top to bottom) in comparison with other seals of this calibre which have been excavated, and it is made of stone.\textsuperscript{20} It has been—and still is—hotly debated, as it comes from a private collection and has no provenance, meaning scholars have no idea where it was originally excavated or even whether it is authentic. Of thousands of examples of these Hebrew inscribed seals, only 35 belong to women.\textsuperscript{21} Scholars who advocate reading the inscription as 'Jezebel'\textsuperscript{22} explain that the last two letters, 'BL', imitate Phoenician writing, providing an important link to Jezebel's homeland and making the seal more likely to be hers. Therefore, if we favour the seal belonging to Jezebel of the Bible, we possibly have tangible evidence of the her existence from archaeology.

**Jezebel's Role: Scripture and Religious Dogma Within the Bible**

Utilising biblical material to explore everyday women's roles is problematic as the Bible is written by men, for men. It is a product of its time, written by the 'winners'—the monotheists of Yahweh.\textsuperscript{23} These men who wrote about women in this period had no real interest or commentary on the everyday lives of women,\textsuperscript{24} and what happened behind closed doors of their households, if it wasn't somehow linked to Yahweh.\textsuperscript{25} The Bible however, covers a considerable range of subjects related to women; some examples are women's sexuality, restrictive law codes\textsuperscript{26} (in comparison to other ancient Near Eastern countries, which all have their own unique law codes), views of the 'ideal', the 'other' and the 'strange' woman, the heroics of righteous biblical women

\textsuperscript{20}Seals are typically carved out of limestone or semi-precious stone, but some are made of bone, glass, bronze or silver. Many seals were set in signet rings; see Korpel 2008, 34.

\textsuperscript{21}For further information and the debate of the seal; see Korpel 2008, 37–39, 80.

\textsuperscript{22}Avigad 1964, 274–276; see also Korpel 2008; Down 2011, 113.

\textsuperscript{23}Finkelstein and Silberman 2001, 223.

\textsuperscript{24}It must be noted here that we are looking at daily lives of women not men (which is also sometimes lacking unless in the public sphere), as it goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{25}However, women who helped save or destroy their country were mentioned, but the everyday involvement of women was quiet often looked over. For further information see Stanton 1993; see also Bach 1999.

\textsuperscript{26}Setel 1992, 30–39.
and conversely, the naming and shaming of 'unrighteous' women. Additionally, the
Bible became a sacred text invoked by later religions in order to repress women,
confine them to domestic life and limit their participation in the public and religious
sphere.\textsuperscript{27} As illustrated within the Bible, Jezebel's deeds, actions, customs, and
behaviour as a 'foreigner' were evaluated and condemned. They were judged against
the biblical authors' own cultural standards, fears and prejudices, rather than an
anthropologically emic approach being taken.\textsuperscript{28} It is crucial to identify the 'middle
road' by analysing the cultural prejudice that has found its way into this written
source. It is also necessary to realise that once a story (Jezebel's in this case) has been
selected for narration, it becomes subject to the principles of the wider narration.\textsuperscript{29} In
the biblical story, Jezebel appears as a Machiavellian woman, a murderer, who
follows a different god,\textsuperscript{30} turning the king and the kingdom's back on Yahweh,
causing the downfall (but not extinction) not only of the Omride dynasty, but of Judah
itself. Jezebel's death is the lesson of 2 Kings 9. God does not take betrayal lightly—
beware the foreign woman! Her ways, her religion and her seduction will bring death.

Gary Beckman argues that there are two points to be borne in mind when approaching
polytheist religions. Firstly,

\begin{quote}
in contrast to... 'religions of the book', which are based on an authoritative text
or texts, traditional polytheisms possess no single legitimate (and legitimizing)
written statement of their beliefs, no 'scripture'. Therefore they are not centred
on dogmas whose acceptance is obligatory for all members of the community.
Under such conditions heresy is as impossible as orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{27} Gruber 1999, 117.
\textsuperscript{28} Brosius 1996, 1.
\textsuperscript{29} Brosius 1996, 2.
\textsuperscript{30} Controversial author Merlin Stone (1978, 167) explains that these 'pagan' religions—especially Canaanite and
Philistine—were reported by the biblical writers from the point of view which was most advantageous and
acceptable to their theology, rather than as a totally objective historical record.
\textsuperscript{31} Beckman 2005, 367.
This leads to the second point, which is that, typically, polytheistic societies had no need to write theoretical explanations for those not already participating in the system: "The ancients knew what they were about when they 'did' religion and...did not engage in proselytising, an activity which would have called for the composition of religious propaganda and catechisms." There is substantial evidence of these pagan, polytheist religions—primarily from the Egyptians, the Mesopotamians and the Greeks—as they kept a remarkable quantity of meticulous records, which have survived to the present, including mythology and king lists. Many peoples, including the Sumerians, Hittites, Phoenicians and Egyptians, recorded king lists, which have survived the passage of time and have aided archaeologists and scholars immensely, helping to systematise and confirm the years of kings' reigns, their subsequent dynasties, the creation of law codes (under the ruling kings' name) and, in some instances such as Egypt, women taking on the role of the kings. For example, *The Egyptian King Lists*, dating from the Late Pre-Dynastic Period (3250–3050 BCE) up to the Ptolemaic Era (c. 304–30 BCE), have aided archaeologists and scholars in discerning the length of each king's reign, the appearance of queens, the changes in ruling families and the genealogy of each ruler.

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32 Beckman 2005, 367.  
33 Some of these Egyptian female pharaohs will be discussed in subsequent chapters.  
34 Which includes the Abydos king list, the Den seal king list, the Karnak king list, the Mantho king lists, the Palermo Stone, the Saqqara Tablet and South Saqqara Stone and the Turin papyrus king list. For a thorough analysis on the king lists, see Redford 1986.  
35 These lists, although helpful, must not be taken as 100 per cent accurate. They are prone to hyperbole—especially regarding their family genealogy (which quite often was traced back to the gods). For more information, see Redford 1986.
Biblical archaeologist Beth Alpert Nakhai explains that women's domestic contributions are proven to be essential components of human survival. It is only in recent times that this fact has been questioned. In addition, women's contributions are evident elsewhere throughout society, in royal, religious, and funerary contexts, highlighting the fact that the traditional scholarly reliance upon dichotomisation and compartmentalisation must be resisted, and new paradigms developed and adopted.36

In reference to royalty, we hear of the numerous and mighty deeds of the king, yet in most Near Eastern civilisations, to hear of the great deeds of queens is rare. It does happen that sometimes, in various situations and extreme emergencies, we hear of a queen transgressing her normal role and taking on the mantle of kingship. Whether that woman is then celebrated or denounced is dictated by the frameworks of her particular society and its ideals of women. Deborah Gera states that "women, no matter what their nationality … have proven capable of ruling their countries, overseeing the smooth transition of power, building great works, and actually taking to the battlefield if the need arose."37 There are in existence ancient texts relating to women, typically within the royal sphere, performing extraordinary deeds and thus transgressing the 'typical' ideals of their societies. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, this concept is still generally relevant, so please refer to Appendix A (page 159) for an analysis of a few chosen works.

It has been observed that "the ruling sex, having the power to diffuse its own outlooks, tends to generalize its specific ideology. Should the trends of the subordinate sex run counter, they are likely to be suppressed all the more forcibly in

36 Nakhai 2009, xv–xvi.
proportion as the dominant sex is more overwhelming." In this context, it is vitally important that we first review the law codes, which generally dictated the position of everyday women *en masse* within a few selected societies, which provides a good background of the social context in which Jezebel makes her appearance. Another reason for this comparative analysis is the Israelite religious ideal that its law codes applied to both royal and commons, providing groundwork to move on to the analysis of some selected societies' more "outstanding, brave and virtuous" royal women.

Law collections can often provide deeper insights into the position of women in society. Every ancient Near Eastern society, although vastly different, had concepts about the proper relationships between spouses, parents, children and other kin that were reinforced through law codes, religious prescriptions, taboos, education, social customs or other means. The first legal records for which we have evidence appear in the mid-third millennium. Twelve such documents have survived—eight in the form of cuneiform on clay, and four from the Hebrew Bible. These ten law codes comprise of the Laws of Urukagina (c. 2350 BCE), the Laws of Ur-Namma (LU [c. 2112–2095 BCE]), the Laws of Lipit-Ishtar (LL [1860 BCE]), the Laws of Eshnunna (LE [c. 1930 BCE]), the Laws of Hammurabi (LH [1727 BCE]), the Hittite Laws (HL [c. 1500 BCE]), the Middle Assyrian Laws (MAL [c. 1115–1077 BCE]), the Neo-Babylonian Laws (NBL [c. 600–500 BCE]), the Covenant Code in Exodus 21–33 (c. 600 BCE), the legal texts and law codes in the Book of Leviticus and Book of Numbers (c. 500 BCE), and the Deuteronomistic Code in Deuteronomy (c. 600–700 BCE).

38 Vaerting 2002, 160. 39 Arnold and Beyer 2002, 104–117; See also Walton 1989, 89. 40 Stol 1995, 123. 41 Wiesner–Hanks 2011, 26. 42 Diakonoff (1969, 173–203) and others argued that the law code of Urukagina is questionable as he was not of the ruling dynasty at Lagash and was not a reformer at all, but more a reactionary. See also, Yoffee 2004, 103.
BCE). These law codes are the primary focus for legal-historical study of the ancient Near East, yet they are far from comprehensive, with some even omitting major crimes like murder.

Various restrictions were placed upon ancient Near Eastern women through the different law codes, with the majority pertaining to women's sexual licence, as well as to their dowry and inheritance. Ancient Near Eastern law authority Bruce Wells states (regarding only the cuneiform law codes) that throughout Ancient Near Eastern history, women appear to have had nearly as much legal capacity as men. They could sue in court, testify, own property, sell property, and function as parties to contracts. The view must be tempered, however, by the consideration that many, if not most, of the women who acted on their own in these roles were very likely widows.

Unfortunately, non-elite women remained largely anonymous in texts and law codes. In most areas of the ancient Near East, laws were passed mandating women to be virgins before marriage and imposing strict punishment for married women who engaged in adultery. Marriage provided a way to harness and control women's sexuality and also made it easier for men to address inheritance with the notion that all children his wife bore were his own. The Israelites were quite unique in the ancient Near East, as their laws were dictated within the Bible, a religious text, by the 'winners' — the Yahwists — dictated from their God, a religious text, as will be addressed later in this chapter.

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44 This was most likely because the law codes only dealt with very specific categories, and the punishment for murder was more so common knowledge. Wells (2005, 192–3) explains there were minimal texts on the cases of murder and the legal jurisdiction covering this crime.
45 Meek (trans.) 1969, 166–177.
46 Just to remember here, many scholars view ancient Israel as a separate entity in regards to their law codes, and restrictions on women. See Marsman (2003, 38); and Wells (2005, 183–195) for discussion.
48 In Israel, all offenses were ultimately against God, whom prescribed the laws, which were written down by his followers. See Arnold and Beyer 2002, 104.
Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian Laws

Mesopotamia boasts some of the earliest law codes in the world, including the most widely renowned of all cuneiform codes, the 'Laws of Hammurabi', generally considered to have been created to justify the legitimacy of Hammurabi's reign (that is, as political propaganda). Thus the king states: "In order that the mighty may not wrong the weak, to provide just ways for the waif and the widow, I have inscribed my precious pronouncements upon my stela."49 The purpose of state and cult was to maintain the stability of created 'justice', not just by establishing laws and good administration, but also by providing for the needs of the gods in the sacrificial cult, undoing the negative effects of sin, educating, and passing down the correct doctrines to the young.50

A typical Mesopotamian family consisted of a male head of the household, his wife, his sons, his sons' wives and children, and his unmarried daughters. In many areas of the ancient Near East, daughters were not legally entitled to any share of their father's estate,51 but received some compensation in the form of their dowry, which was passed down matrilineally (although sometimes it 'disappeared' into their husband's assets).52 If a man had no male heir, in some instances he could adopt one of his daughters as his heir, but this required her to marry a relative, which was seen as yet another way to keep the inheritance within the family unit. Law codes are the only means (besides archaeology) of understanding the socio-economic positions and community issues of the masses, but they must be taken with caution, as these codes

49 Roth 1995, 133
51 Wells (2005, 192) states that the exception was Egypt, where daughters had inheritance rights the same as sons.
52 Wells 2005, 192.
may not reflect the actual reality.\textsuperscript{53} By briefly viewing some of the ancient Near Eastern law codes, it can be ascertained whether everyday women were often at odds within these law codes. Although Jezebel was a woman, royalty could often transgress these codes. In Israelite law, however, it essentially was the idyllic belief within the Bible was that the law codes were adhered to by all—even by the king and his house.\textsuperscript{54}

![Figure 6: Code of Hammurabi Stele (from the Lourve Museum 2014).](image)

In Hammurabi's time, women's roles were legitimised in what we might sometimes view now as male occupations; for example, as beer brewers.\textsuperscript{55} (In fact, the craft of beer brewing was protected by female deities.)\textsuperscript{56} Furthermore, by running ale houses and wine shops women could avoid being tarred as somewhat 'shady' characters,

\textsuperscript{53} Wells 2005, 186).
\textsuperscript{54} Walton 1989, 88–9.
\textsuperscript{55} Homan (2004, 85) has argued that beer brewing in the ancient Near East was in fact a women's profession.
\textsuperscript{56} The main beer goddess was named Ninkasi. See Nemet-Nejat 1999, 107.
outside the law, as many taverns acted as cover for brothels. William Boscawen explained that

the freedom granted to the women in Babylonia allowed them to hold and manage their own estates and this was especially the case with priestesses of the temple, who traded extensively...One of the most interesting and characteristic features of this early civilisation of the Babylonians was the high position of women. The mother here is always represented by a sign which means 'goddess of the house'. Any sin against the mother and repudiation against the mother was punished by banishment from the community. These are the facts which are evidently indicative of a people who at one time held the law of matrilineal descent.57

Although this observation was made in the late 19th century, it remains pertinent. Hammurabi's law code made it the society's responsibility to help provide for the less fortunate—widows and divorcees—so they could maintain their property and live a life free from poverty.

Royal women also played vital roles within the Mesopotamian palace, fulfilling both political and social requirements. We have textual evidence that the women closest to the king—his wife or wives, mother, sisters and daughters—took part in political, administrative and, most importantly, religious life, yet this power was exercised on behalf of their husbands or sons, rather than independently.58 Sarah Melville states:

During the Neo-Assyrian period (940–610BCE) elite women took part in economic affairs, owned and administered estates, and fulfilled tax obligations. The king's primary wife was wealthy in her own right. She received a share of tribute and audience gifts which other wives and concubines did not, and she could even own her own palace. The consort and the Queen Mother employed a large number of men and women, and ran households that were in many respects mirror images of those of the king's or crown prince's.59

These privileged women enjoyed economic freedom and responsibilities within the administration which were on a par with, or exceeded, those of many men.

57 Boscawen 1895, 104–105.
58 Melville, 2005, 238.
59 Melville 2005, 240.
Saggs effectively sums up Mesopotamian law codes and their views of women within a paragraph:

The status of women was certainly much higher in the early Sumerian city state than it subsequently became...There are hints that in the very beginning of Sumerian society, women had a much higher status than in the hey-day of Sumerian culture: this chiefly rests on the fact that in early Sumerian religion a prominent position is occupied by a goddess who afterwards virtually disappeared, save—with the exception of Ishtar—as consorts to particular gods. The Underworld itself was under the sole rule of a goddess, for myth explains how she came to take a consort; and goddesses played a part in the divine decision making assembly in myths. There is even one strong suggestion that polyandry may have at one time been practiced, for the reforms of Urukagina refer to women who had taken more than one husband; some scholars shied away from this conclusion suggesting that the reference might be only to the remarriage of a widow but the wording of the Sumerian text does not really support this.60

There are, however, restrictions which the law code places upon women, primarily pertaining to their sexuality. Typically of the ancient Near East, in Babylonia the male was the head of the household. The process of marriage included four stages: 1: the engagement; 2: payment by the families of both the bride (dowry) and the groom (bride price); 3: the bride's move to her father-in-law's house; and 4: sexual intercourse.61 Women's sexuality was kept firmly in hand by their fathers and then their husbands, as this ensured legitimate children in the line of succession. If a woman was unable to produce a child—which was deemed essential (much like in Israelite laws [Genesis 16:1–4])—she could gift her maidservant to her husband to bear his children, and they would still be considered legitimate. The Babylonian law codes also protected women after marriage and saw to it that a man could only take a second wife when his first wife was incapacitated by illness.62 Women could also

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60 Saggs 1962, 159; see also Nemet-Nejat 1999, 106.
divorce, although the fact that the cases went through the Babylonian courts was a deterrent for many women.

Women's dowries in Babylonia, unlike in some other ancient Near Eastern areas, were intended for the woman and only reverted to the husband after her death. The father gave his daughter certain possessions which the husband was able to make use of, but which ultimately belonged to her. If she was widowed or divorced without fault on her part, they would still be considered her belongings. Considering the religious restraints that inhabited most of the biblical law codes of the Israelites, the Babylonian laws seemed to bestow a certain amount of freedom (economic and social) upon Babylonian women, as long as that freedom didn't entail endangering any facet of their sexual purity.

Throughout the Old Assyrian I Period (c. 2000–1814 BCE), the legal rights of Assyrian women were not dissimilar to those of women in Babylonia. There was a particular merchant class of women that were literate and competent professionals. These women often acted on behalf of their husbands who were absent; trading in other cities. They had more freedom and wealth than later Assyrian women, as can be evidenced by excavated cuneiform tablets entailing marriage contracts in which both men and women could initiate divorce. However, in divorce, women still got a relatively inferior deal because after it was finalised, they had no financial or physical

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63 Unlike other areas of the ancient Near East in which a man (sometimes a woman) could divorce via investigation by their local city council (Egypt) and sometimes merely by declaring it out loud (Late Old Babylonian c. 17th century BCE). See Ginsberg 2001, 203, and Lipinski 1981, 15–19.
64 De Vaux 1997, 28.
65 Tetlow 2004, 120.
67 Tetlow 2004, 121–123.
claim over their husbands or sons. Nevertheless, women of this period were also allowed to compose wills and leave property to their chosen beneficiaries.

During the Old Assyrian Period II (c. 1814–1762 BCE), the Amorites had conquered northern Mesopotamia, bringing their patriarchal legal system with them and wiping out the merchant class, replacing the existing law code with Amorite tribal customs and the edicts of their kings. Their laws were more strict on women than the previous code, and as the Middle Assyrian Period began to flourish (c. 16–10th century BCE) Amorite edicts and customs evolved into the Middle Assyrian Laws (MAL) (12th century BCE). Many copies of these laws have been excavated at ancient Ashur, and although they are broken and somewhat fragmentary, an insight to women's rights in regard to marriage, divorce, inheritance, rape, veiling and criminal offences committed by women can be distinguished. The primary role of women was now to produce children, and they had no say in their marriages, which were arranged by fathers, brothers or uncles. The role of the woman's family was to be respected, as can be seen through the following law:

§27 If a man took another man's daughter without asking her father and mother and did not arrange for (lit. establish) a libation' and marriage contract with her father and mother, though she live in his house for a year, she is not a wife.

New legislation in regard to veiling was introduced, stating that "high-status women had to veil, while harlots, and slaves were forbidden to, showing a differentiation by

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68 Tetlow 2004, 121–123.
69 Tetlow 2004, 124.
70 Reigner 2009, 27.
71 Tetlow 2004, 126.
72 Although it is stated here that the father and mother had a role to play in the marriage contracts, it was the man that made the final selection and it was expected that his wife would stand behind that decision. However, in many ancient Near Eastern countries, it was not uncommon for wives to 'influence' their husband's decision; see Marsman 2003, 50–74; see also Greengus 1969, 127.
class and division of respectability that was to continue later." Veiling was perceived as a symbol of respectability, and signified that the wearer was not available for sexual relationships. Veiling was another way men exercised control over women any time they went out in public. Some feminists claim that the veil was ultimately "a symbol of domination of men over women." These veiling laws have continued to the present day through the Qur'an, the central religious text of Islam which instructs males, "Tell the female believers that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts, and not display of their adornment except for what is apparent, and draw their kerchiefs over their person..." (24:31). The 'fear' and 'threat' of women became the norm. What was once a somewhat equal society was now patriarchal, causing women to withdraw from the public sphere and depositing them solely into the household sphere.

**Egypt and the Law**

One debate which consistently crops up in gender relations in Egyptological scholarship is between those who would emphasise the independence and autonomy of Egyptian women as an (admirable) anomaly in the ancient world and those who prefer to stress the evidence that, despite the fact that a few women seem to have held economic and political power, most of the female population were occupied with domestic duties and were economically dependent upon their male relatives.

Nikki Keddie argues the first view, that Egyptian women's social and sexual conduct were often much more liberated than scholars originally assumed. No legal codes (at

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73 Keddie (2007, 14) states that veiling here means covering the hair and much of the face and body.
74 Tetlow 2004, 130.
75 Tetlow 2004, 130.
76 There is debate over the word 'person' as it could mean body, face, bosom, neck etc. See Keddie 2007.
77 Roth 1995, 233.
78 Keddie 2007, 11.
this time) have been excavated in ancient Egypt, but written evidence used to construct Egyptian history typically derives from two main sources: monumental inscriptions (carved or painted on temple or tomb walls), and administrative records, stories and informal prayers preserved on papyrus and ostraca. In essence, Egyptian law was based mainly on a universal sense of what was right and wrong: truth, harmony and stability—'ma'at'—which was embodied as a goddess.

Within the entire ancient Near East, most narratives of powerful women originate from Egypt. With the exception of Hatshepsut, who will be discussed in the subsequent chapter, they are known from the culture's meticulous records, and are also referred to at later dates by figures such as Herodotus and Diodorus, as well as in The Anonymous Tractatus de Mulieribus. Diodorus, who visited Egypt between 60 and 56 BCE, stated that "it was ordained that the queen should have greater power and honour than the king and that among private persons the wife should enjoy authority over her husband" (Book 1:27). However, the dates verify that his observations were made quite late in Egyptian history—when Egypt was no longer ruled by Egyptians—by which time the situation was quite unlike it was during the Old Kingdom, when only the king had power and an identity.

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80 This is a very basic interpretation of an incredibly multilayered word. Jan Assman (2001) has written an impressive book on the subject titled Ma'at: Righteousness and Immortality in Ancient Egypt.
81 Many historical texts (including the Bible) can of course not automatically be considered completely reliable and factual sources. Moore (2006, 36) explains that if (ancient) texts are incapable of representing reality, have varying standards of objectivity, which conflicts with the texts' evidence, and are absent of clear referents, they cannot be considered to be entirely factual sources. It is also important to determine why a text was originally composed, its original audience and the intention of the author; see Stanford (1998, 65). Herodotus, although sometimes called the 'father of history', cannot be considered an incontrovertible source, as many of his 'histories' are gleaned from second-hand knowledge, mythology and heresy.
82 Hawass 2006, 15, 195.
Egyptologist Ann Macy Roth surmises that the ancient Egyptian view of the world originally saw women and men as equal, and this was reflected in Egyptian law. This view was only later limited and subsequently modified, she says, by community pressures, values and traditions.\(^{83}\) Lynn Meskell, however, disagrees, based on evidence from excavations at Dier el Medina by Schiaparelli (1927) which yielded an intact tomb of an Eighteenth Dynasty noble and royal architect, Kha, and his wife Merit.\(^{84}\) Their funerary remains reflected an inherent social inequality, with 196 objects attributed to Kha and his professional status when living, 39 to Merit individually, and six inscribed as shared.\(^{85}\) Merit's inequality was not a unique case and generally the representation of a woman's life was overshadowed by that of her husband's within the funerary context.\(^{86}\) Women appear more in terms of their association with their husband than as individuals in their own right. Even Merit's coffin and wrappings (which caused her remains to be in a poorer condition) were less elaborate than Kha's and significantly inferior in construction.\(^{87}\)

In ancient Egyptian society, theoretically women had the same legal rights as men, although social custom and community values/pressures seem to have prevented them from exercising them very often.\(^{88}\) It can be acknowledged from viewing paintings of married couples that men had a higher status than women socially: women have paler skin (due to being more often in the home), are depicted on a smaller scale than the men, are usually depicted in a passive pose with affectionate gestures always towards the men, and are generally situated on the husband's left-hand side.\(^{89}\) In the paintings,

\(^{83}\) Roth 1995, 233.
\(^{84}\) Meskell 1998, 371.
\(^{85}\) Meskell 1998, 372.
\(^{86}\) Meskell 1998, 372.
\(^{87}\) Meskell 1998, 373.
\(^{88}\) McDowell 1999, 40–1.
\(^{89}\) Roth 1995, 223, 228; see also; Nakhai 2009, iii.
which are an important source of information for scholars about what were considered the most important physical assets of each gender, the Egyptian artists differentiated between men and women by depicting women as broad hipped (to emphasise their fertility), nude from the waist up and wearing a long skirt, whereas men were portrayed with triangular chests and narrow waists.  

However, in contrast to this pictorial evidence, Eduard Meyer explains that women were remarkably free in Egypt. Even as late as the fourth century BCE (by which time the Greeks ruled Egypt and it was a patriarchal society), in terms of marriage, the wife was able to choose her husband and could divorce him with a compensation payment. There was no law on marriages—nor any interest at all on behalf of the state (no records were kept)—yet divorce was a viable option and quite common. If a man divorced his wife, he was required to return her dowry and also pay a fine, yet a woman divorcing her husband lost nothing. Egyptian women were largely restricted to the home, engaged in activities such as child bearing, cleaning, sewing, cooking

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90 Nakhai 2009, 4–5.
92 Johnson 2012, 19 January; see also, Tyldesley 1996, 67.
and caring for the old and sick. When women worked outside the household domestic sphere, their jobs reflected their household roles: weaving, serving as wet nurses, preparing and serving food and drink, maid service and probably prostitution. However, women could have a prominent role within the religious sphere too, as priestesses—especially within the goddess Hathor's temple. Interestingly enough, Herodotus around 450 BCE associated the Egyptians' strange environment with their peculiar customs and he disputed these gendered domestic roles, arguing it was the men not the women who were charged with them:

Just as the Egyptians have a climate peculiar to themselves, and their river is different in its nature from all other rivers, so, too, have they instituted customs and laws contrary for the most part to those of the rest of mankind. Among them, the women buy and sell, the men stay at home and weave; and whereas in weaving all others push the woof upwards, the Egyptians push it downwards. Men carry burdens on their heads, women on their shoulders (Book 2, 35:2–3).

Women could also hold power within the circles of Egyptian royalty, but ultimately, the male pharaoh still had definitive power over them. Debatably, it was originally the matrilineal line that had rights to the throne, thus royal Egyptian women were not permitted by the pharaoh to marry foreign kings. Foreign women were allowed to join the king's household, strengthening ties to neighbouring countries, and the foreign kings gained power through the association (via marriage) with the Egyptians. The two women closest to the king were the queen and his mother, followed by his sisters and daughters. The Queen Mother was highly respected and honoured. Often when the king was too young to rule she would act as regent on his behalf. Both Queen Ahmose Nefertari and Queen Ahotep I acted as regents for their...

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93 Roth 2005 (A), 227.
94 Egyptian rulers—much like their gods—married their siblings, which aided in keeping the throne within the dynasty, so it was quite important that some of the daughters and sisters of the pharaoh remained in Egypt, and were not married off to foreign princes.
95 Meier 2000, 165–173, 170–1. The one exception to this was when Tutankhamun died, his wife Ankhesenamun, wrote to the king of the Hittites, Suppiluliumas, asking him to send a son to Egypt to marry her and become pharaoh. See Rice 1999, 198.
sons. An infamous example of this situation involves Queen Hatshepsut, who acted on behalf of her young stepson, as will be examined in the next chapter.

The women of the royal household also held the position with the title 'God's Wife of Amun', which was mostly ceremonial. The women who held this office in its later form were the king's royal daughters, who did not pass the office on to their own daughters but to the daughters of the next king, whom they adopted.

**Phoenician Law**

Unfortunately for scholars and the like, the Phoenicians left behind no historical or memorial epigraphs, nor written law codes, and what information we possess about them (by means of archaeological excavations) is typically of a religious nature. Their two great political institutions, the palace and the temple, were respectively the house of the king and the house of god. But these were often merged into one establishment, accommodating the king of the city of the god Melqart, Tyre, who was also perceived as the god's representative on earth. The king was advised by a council of elders made up of members of the wealthier merchant families. The women of the royal household were quite influential, with the king's wife and daughters holding the position of priestesses of Baal, whilst the king was the chief priest of Astarte.

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96 Roth 2005, 231–2.
99 Melqart was the supreme ruler of the Phoenician pantheon and was also known as Baal. See Aubet 1993, 119.
100 A later epithet of Anat/Anath whom will be addressed in Chapter 4. Aubet 1993, 122.
The amalgamation of religion and kingship is a popular theme throughout the ancient Near East—for example, in Hattusa, Egypt and Mesopotamia—because, as in the case of the Phoenician king, the monarchs were seen as the gods' representatives on earth. In the Phoenician sources he was simply called Baal, meaning 'lord' 'master' or 'husband'.

The king was the intermediary between the mortals and the immortals, and he was accountable if the gods became angered. In regard to this dual role in Phoenicia, "temple and palace retained an almost absolute power...especially if we bear in mind that the function of the chief priest was in the hands of the king himself, or of members in the royal family." Josephus noted that Jezebel's father, King Ethbaal, held absolute power and was 'a priest of Astarte' (Book 1:18); thus, many present-day scholars accept that Jezebel herself was given the position of a priestess of Baal (this matter will be addressed in Chapter Three).

Women in Phoenicia, from the limited information available seemed to have enjoyed considerable freedom especially in regards to religion and industry. Women were able to have a priestly involvement in the religious sphere, becoming priestesses, able to reside within the temple, and were authorised to take part in sacred ceremonies.

"...Phoenician women contributed significantly to the local economy, especially in cottage industries such as weaving and textile manufacturing." There is also tantalizing bits of information regarding their status in society found on excavated tophets and on "[o]ne votive stela, a woman named Shiboulet is identified by profession as a 'city merchant'." On an excavated Phoenician sarcophagus, there is a banqueting scene which comprises Phoenician elite women banqueting with men,

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101 Aubet 1993, 123.
102 Aubet 1993, 122.
103 Kroeger and Evans 2002, 197; see also Stone 1978, 177; Williams 2008, 14.
104 Rawlingson 1889, 350
105 Markoe 2000, 92.
106 Markoe 2000, 92.
reclining on couches together with men, and even playing music for their husbands. 107 Royal women and non-royal women were heavily involved in the cult, attending and participating in religious processions and the presentation of offerings to the gods, and working in the temple as staff, including priestesses, mediums, readers of omens, dream interpreters and sacred temple prostitutes. 108 When Phoenicians commissioned works of art, we see women participating in the activities of their cities and being presented in a confident and respected manner, all sharing and interacting in the same sphere as their men. 109

**Hittite Law**

The Hittite law codes were constantly being amended and modernised as the need arose. They have been likened to the Babylonian law codes in that a quantity of the laws appear to relate to somewhat rare and odd occurrences, leading to the assumption that they were created and became precedent on the fly, as the issues arose within the society. As Hittite scholar Oliver Gurney observed, perhaps the law varied in different parts of Hatti. 110 The law codes are broken into several sections; the laws which will be briefly examined here involved women's rights in marriage, dowry, rape and compensation.

Yet again, the husband was considered the head of the household. The primary areas women were involved in were marriage, family, child bearing and administration of

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107 Rawlinson 1889, 727.
108 An interesting point is that there has been no evidence to date either to affirm or deny that royal women were able to engage in the profession of temple prostitution; See Bird 1987.
110 Gurney 2004, 85.
the household.\textsuperscript{111} The father was able to 'give away' his daughter, and, once married, the wife became the husband's possession. If, for example, she was caught in the act of adultery, her husband had the final say on her fate.\textsuperscript{112} A woman had the right to her dowry, but after death it was transferred to her husband; if she was living in her father's house, however, the dowry was passed on to her children.\textsuperscript{113} Rape, assault and miscarriages usually resulted in monetary compensation. If a woman was raped in her house, it was thought certain that someone close by should have heard her cries for help. If no cries of help were heard, it would be considered a case of adultery and the woman would be killed.\textsuperscript{114} Miscarriages due to assault and battery were compensated (as they were seen as a loss of property rather than a life), and the amount was dependent on the stage of the pregnancy and whether the woman was a slave or free.\textsuperscript{115}

Although some of these laws were restrictive and overprotective of Hittite women, in comparison to other law codes such as Leviticus and Numbers within the Bible, and some Assyrian laws, it can be seen that Hittite women held a higher position than women in other ancient Near Eastern societies. Hittite women could function as priestesses, serve as witnesses in court, and own land.\textsuperscript{116} Quite often Hittite queens were dominant and had a certain amount of control over their lands.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{111} Tetlow 2004, 179.
\textsuperscript{112} Gurnery 2004, 97.
\textsuperscript{113} Gurnery 2004, 97.
\textsuperscript{114} Tetlow 2004, 184.
\textsuperscript{115} Tetlow 2004, 184.
\textsuperscript{116} Tetlow 2004, 192; see also Pritchard (ed.) 1969, 208–11, 399.
\textsuperscript{117} Tetlow 2004, 192; see also Pritchard (ed.) 1969, 208–11, 399.
Israelite Law

Most historians place Israel and Judah within their own isolated monotheistic patriarchal society, as they differ from other regions of the ancient Near East.118 For example, Bill Arnold and Bryan Beyer state "...In Israel, all offenses were ultimately against God. In the Bible, law is revelatory, since it is God given and prescribed for the people; in Mesopotamia, the law was approved and sanctioned by the gods, but was only descriptive of what a well-ordered society should be like."119 Originally, the Israelites worshipped a wide variety of gods and goddesses (discussed in Chapter Four) but monotheism became the State 'norm', (but not the private sector 'norm', as polytheism was still thriving and popular) around the seventh to sixth century BCE, with worship confined to a single male deity: Yahweh. As the biblical writers were all followers of monotheism, it is reflected heavily within their work especially within the Covenant code within Exodus, and the code of Deuteronomy. It must always be taken into account that the biblical codes were employed in the service of religious agenda, so their laws protected the religion rather than the individual, and also demoted and controlled women.120

The Hebrew/Old Testament laws121 appear to have been included within the Bible to codify responses to very specific incidents and refer to varying situations, but the main focus here will be on women and their rights. The relevant laws covered a woman's right to engage in economic activities, her inheritance, what she could

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118 Isolated here refers to the biblical writers. Israel was at this time the only society to worship a single deity (although there is evidence which will be discussed in subsequent chapters disputing this fact) See Marsman 2003, 38.
120 Wells 2005, 193.
121 Which encompass the Covenant Code, the Deuteronomic Code and the Priestly Code.
bequeath to her children, the attitude towards rape, abortion and infidelity (in regard to the husband and wife), and—only among the Hebrews—the penalty of death for women who lost their virginity before marriage. The covenant code of Exodus were created earlier than the Deuteronomistic code, and although the latter are still biased in favour of Israelite males, they are arguably marginally less sexist towards women than those of the covenant.

The biblical ideal was the woman who faultlessly fulfilled the roles of wife and mother. Motherhood was pivotal, because a woman's ability to bear sons (more so than daughters) for her husband ensured the continuation of his patriarchal line. As Bird states, the ideal woman of the Bible, as described in Proverbs 31:10–31, is manager of the household, directing the work of servants and seeing to it by industriousness and foresight that her family is well provided for in food and clothing. She engages in business transactions, apparently on her own initiative...setting out a vineyard with the profits reaped from her undertakings, and manufacturing clothing.

This was the biblical authors' truth, a truth which may be only a truth to himself and perhaps even a bias one at that. But it was still viewed as the truth at the time it was written. Nowadays feminists see the Deuteronomy law code depicting a rather dark, controlling programme which restricts women financially, sexually, and religiously. Saint Titus (c. first century CE), a companion of Saint Paul the Apostle stated that "A woman is assumed to be an obedient wife...a beautiful young virgin... She is expected not to become an active subject, but to play the role imposed on her by culture as an object (2:5)." A man who had no sons would force his daughters to marry into his

123 Richard 2003, 151.
124 Bird 1983, 265.
125 Oren 2009, 145.
extended family (Numbers 36:7–9) to ensure that his property would remain with his line and not be transferred to another when his daughter(s) married.\textsuperscript{126}

The Levite laws of the Israelites (from Deuteronomy written around 1406 BCE), demanded virginity until marriage for all women, under threat of death by stoning or burning (Deuteronomy 22:21). Once a woman was married, any transgression of total fidelity also carried the threat of death for the man committing infidelity, and the woman he slept with was the evil who must be purged from Israel (Deuteronomy 22:22). If a man slept with a virgin pledged to another, and his actions were discovered, he was taken to the gate of the town and stoned to death (Deuteronomy 22:23–4). The penalty of burning or stoning a woman to death for loss of her virginity had not been broached within other law codes of the ancient Near East. Furthermore, in Israelite law, a woman who was the victim of rape and was unmarried was forced to marry her rapist (Deuteronomy 22:29), who could never divorce her and who also paid her father fifty shekels of silver (Deuteronomy 22:29). In addition, if the woman became pregnant, she would be forced to have the baby, the product of her rape.\textsuperscript{127}

Archaeological evidence verifies that even after an Israelite woman's death the unchanging hierarchy remains emphasised. Ussishkin states that "thus it seems that one body, almost certainly that of the husband, was placed higher in the tomb than the body of the wife, so that the woman's inferior status was also demonstrated after death."\textsuperscript{128}

Women today from all walks of life are still reminded of the sexism in the Book of Genesis, where they are likened to a crooked rib—the rib of Adam—from which all

\textsuperscript{126} Wells 2005, 192.
\textsuperscript{127} Stone 1978, 156.
\textsuperscript{128} Ussishkin 1970, 33–46.
women originated. In *Sahih Al Bukhari* (one of the six major hadith collections of Sunni Islam dated to circa 630CE) it is stated: "The woman is like a rib; if you try to straighten her, she will break. So if you want to get benefit from her, do so while she still has some crookedness" (7, Hadith No. 113).

So, in conclusion, it appears that many countries of the ancient Near East had quite liberal law codes when it came to women, their dowry, marriage, and economic activities. However, the Israelites' law codes were stricter, with women completely placed within the household sphere and over-protected by their male counterparts. As we have now briefly analysed some of the more prevalent edicts of the ancient Near East, it possible to examine some of its famous queens in the context of their law codes.
Chapter Two:

Goddesses, Mortal and Semi-Mythic Women with Power in the

Ancient Near East

"I am a daughter,
I am a bride,
I am a spouse,
I am a housekeeper"—Hymn to Gula

The field of women's history has been an area of momentous development since the late 1960s. Traditionally ancient history is taken to refer to Greek or Roman traditions, until Amélie Kuhrt and Averil Cameron's landmark book, *Images of Women in Antiquity* (1983), which attempted to rectify this situation by including the ancient Near East in its collections of historical essays on women's roles and ancient attitudes towards the notion of the feminine. This has sparked an interest in not only powerful women of the ancient Near East, but additionally the everyday lives of women in these societies.

There are many examples, although quite often sporadic, throughout the history of the ancient Near East of outstanding women, (historical or mythical) usually within the royal sphere who have either saved their countries from crisis, or have aided in the downfall of their nation. Their actions usually involved aiding their husband (or acting on their behalf) in the saving of their nation and securing the crown for their sons. Before Jezebel's story is recounted, a brief narrative of some of these heroic women would be beneficial to validate that on occasion, women whom were typically

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130 For more information; Chapter Five will give a brief history on the three waves of feminism. See Bahrani 2001, 1.
131 Bahrani 2001, 1.
132 We will be looking at heroics more than the misdeeds.
outstanding (either in a positive or negative light) have indeed occurred within their countries' ancient texts, which celebrate their actions.

The roles of elite women—much like elite men—were complex, multifaceted, and subject to change due to shifting political circumstances. Edward Gibbon in 1821 reflected the typical views of his time by stating: "In every age, the wiser, or at least the stronger of the two sexes has usurped the powers of the State...and a woman is often acknowledged the absolute sovereign of a great kingdom, in which she would be deemed incapable of exercising the smallest employment, civil or military." 

Sexual voracity is often a main feature associated with these warrior/outstanding women; unfortunately, their anomalous or marginal position in society leaves them particularly liable to accusations of sexual misconduct, something which is also true of widows, witches, sorcerers and priestesses. A queen is clearly female in her body and sexuality, but can still exhibit the masculine qualities regarded as necessary in a ruler because of traits inherited or learned from her parents—Jezebel is such a case (Chapter Three). These selected women achieved notoriety because their actions were unusual. Additionally, most of the women that will be analysed here (bar Jezebel and Hatshepsut) in their lifetimes were supported and venerated because they were acting on behalf of their nation, not for themselves. The decisive behaviour of these women was thus deemed acceptable, and was even encouraged if it was

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133 Melville 2005, 243.
134 Gibbon 1821, 149.
135 Gera 1997, 82.
intended to safeguard the rights of a husband or child, as so many of the following myths/stories/histories illustrate.\textsuperscript{137}

**Inanna of Sumer: Fourth Millennium BCE to Ishtar of Akkad**

Inanna/Ishtar\textsuperscript{138} is considered one of the most important deities of the ancient Near East. Because her 'life' spans several millennia, it is important we look at the transformation she went through, concluding—much like Jezebel—with strong denunciations and attempts within the Bible to rid the world of her existence. Scholars of the Sumerian goddess Inanna suffer many trials and frustrations, as she is considered one of the most complicated and difficult goddesses of the ancient Near Eastern pantheon for whom to identify a single designated function.\textsuperscript{139}

Inanna-Ishtar has frequently been described by ancient Near Eastern scholars as a complex, multifaceted goddess...She was a paradox; that is, she embodied within herself polarities and contraries, and thereby she transcended them... She represented both order and disorder, structure and antistructure.\textsuperscript{140}

Not only is Inanna regarded as a mother goddess and fertility goddess, she has been ascribed attributes of a warrior goddess, a goddess of love (including prostitution), and the Lady of Vision, as well as qualities deemed 'masculine', such as her lust for war, her brazen sexuality and her role as a leader in the pantheon. Inanna balances out the one-sidedness of the single male deity of present monotheistic cultures.\textsuperscript{141}

Additionally, the Sumerian goddess Inanna is the exemplar of a deity with humble beginnings to whom various roles were gradually assigned until she came to represent

\textsuperscript{137} Phipps 1992, 83.

\textsuperscript{138} Inanna originally was a Sumerian goddess of love and war (she had many functions but these were the most prominent), but some time around the second millennium BCE, Inanna transformed into the Akkadian goddess of love and war, Ishtar. These names are often used interchangeably by scholars, which will be similarly applicable for this section. For more information on Inanna and Ishtar, see Hallo and Van Dijk (1968).

\textsuperscript{139} Vanstiphout 1984, 225; see also Wakeman 1985, 19; Frymer-Kensky 1992, 71, 78; Meador 2000, 17, 20.

\textsuperscript{140} Harris 1991, 261, 263.

\textsuperscript{141} Meador 2000, 10.
an entire pantheon. We are also fortunate enough to be able, via ancient texts and
cuneiform tablets, to follow Inanna's gradual transformation into Ishtar, the Akkadian
goddess of love and war, a transition which can be understood to mirror the socio-
political developments of the times.

Inanna and Jezebel were both immortal; one divine, and the other immortalised
through her name and deeds. They were both seen as threats to Israelite society: both
were linked to pagan religions, both were foreigners to Israel and both adorned
themselves in death, which many writers (especially in the Bible) have associated
with sexuality. Whereas Inanna is celebrated by Mesopotamia for her mythical roles
and actions, Jezebel is condemned by the stifling law codes of Israel and castigated
for her failure to conform.

The goddess Inanna is an exceedingly complex figure, worshipped within Sumer and
other ancient Near Eastern civilisations from the beginning of the fourth millennium
to the beginning of the first millennium BCE. Inanna is still considered by
feminists, scholars and mediums to be one of the most powerful and celebrated
ancient Near Eastern goddesses, and she was intimately connected with the city of
Uruk. In the fourth millennium BCE in Sumer, gods and goddesses were
represented by images of nature. There were gods of heaven, earth, rain and thunder.
During this period, Inanna was a minor goddess associated with just two functions—
those of the date palm and the store-house. Her shrine was a modest hut (known as
her house—the temple) in which the community stored harvested food to sustain them
in the drier seasons. The power of the storehouse was the potential of dried food and

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142 Kinsley 1988, 113.
143 Pollock 1999, 192; see also Stuckey 2001, 91.
seed, seemingly dead, but in reality harbouring the ability to support and generate life, much like Inanna herself.

In the third millennium we see another side of Inanna's extensive list of identities emerge: that of a sexually innocent maiden. Inanna here appears to embody the archetypal male perception of unmarried womanhood. The second half of the third millennium witnessed the Sumerians' fear of war and savages come to the fore. Their gods, previously viewed as kings and rulers of nature, became powers in human affairs recorded in the history books: "As great lords they defended their cities against attack, and through decrees of social reform and covenants with their servant the human king… maintained justice and righteousness." In regard to Sumerian mythology of the third millennium, the people viewed their gods in anthropomorphic terms. One of Inanna's most pivotal roles was bringing the mes to Uruk; in Old Babylonian thought these were the divine inspiration and archetypes that underlay all aspects of Babylonian civilised life.

During the second millennium, Mesopotamian mythology shifted towards the deification and apotheosis of kings, royalty claiming gods and goddesses as relatives—'parents' or 'spouses'—and claiming to be gods themselves. The first millennium saw the decline of the pantheon and the introduction of one supreme deity for each city state. Nahum, a minor prophet who predicted the fall of the city of Nineveh (612 BCE), was recorded within the Hebrew Bible in this period. Scholar

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144 Stuckey 2001, 94.
145 Kinsley 1988, 120.
146 McIntosh 2005, 212.
147 Jacobsen 1970, 43.
148 Snell 2007, 357.
149 Johnston 1901, 20.
Laurel Lanner, based on John Eaton's 1961 work on Nahum,\textsuperscript{150} and later John Watt's (1975),\textsuperscript{151} has logically proposed that Ishtar, a "...goddess of primary importance in Assyria in the seventh century and [was] associated with the key cities, notably Arbela, Nineveh, Calah and Assur," and she was the goddess mention within Nahum's prophecy.\textsuperscript{152} A passionate monotheist, Nahum demonstrated his contempt towards Ishtar and her temples in Nineveh by abusing what she stood for, accusing her of witchcraft, sorceries and enslavement of her nation, and stating that

all because of the wanton lust of a harlot,
alluring, the mistress of sorceries,
who enslaved nations by her prostitution
and peoples by her witchcraft.
I am against you, declares the Lord Almighty.
I will lift your skirts over your face.
I will show the nations your nakedness
and the kingdoms your shame.
I will pelt you with filth,
I will treat you with contempt
and make you a spectacle.
All who see you will flee from you and say,
'Nineveh is in ruins—who will mourn for her?'
Where can I find anyone to comfort you?

It was the beginning of the end for the reign of Ishtar; the respect and love once shown to her turned into contempt and hate. Male gods were given centre stage, and Inanna and Ishtar faded into the mists of history. However, their characteristics and personality traits were adopted by Astarte, goddess of war within the Phoenician pantheon, and Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Inanna and Ishtar had varying roles and functions, and distinct personalities and characteristics. Mary Wakeman appropriately states that, "As a symbol of change, [Inanna] expresses an acceptance of historical process as being real, while her simultaneous appearance in myth and epic

\textsuperscript{150} Eaton suggested that the enemy within Nahum's prophecy was Ishtar as "...Ishtar herself represents the greater adversary, 'the mythical monster that represents chaos." See Eaton 1961, 60–61; see also Lanner 2006, 109.
\textsuperscript{151} As Lanner explains, "Watts support[ed] Eaton's suggestion noting that the enemies that would be pursued in to darkness are the demonic allies of Ishtar being chased to the Netherworld." See Watts 1975, 105; see also Lanner 2006, 109.
\textsuperscript{152} Lanner 2006, 37, 109.
as a *femme fatale* expresses the fears associated with sexuality, change and death.\textsuperscript{153}

From the beginning of civilisation, Inanna has been present in some form or another and even hard-lined monotheists' in early patriarchal society were unable to stamp out the presence of this omnipotent goddess. In contrast, the biblical authors had no intention of stamping out Jezebel, but instead utilised her and displayed her as a scapegoat, a witch and a whore, and thus forevermore associated with 'sexual evil'.

**Anat: Twenty-Fifth Century BCE**

Anat is another important goddess of the ancient Near East. A few of her later epithets in Jezebel's time were Astarte and Asherah (both recognised in Israel and Phoenicia) and they will be discussed in subsequent chapters. There is a powerful connection with Jezebel's family and her homeland as her father, the king, was head priest of Astarte, and Jezebel priestess of Baal (Astarte's consort). Furthermore, both Jezebel and Anat share similar feisty characteristics, which are utilised to achieve their objectives. The West Semitic goddess Anat/Anath was largely unknown in modern times until the discovery of the Ras Shamra tablets (Late Bronze Age Ugarit) in Syria. The tablets were excavated over several seasons (1929–1939) by a French archaeological team under the direction of Claude Schaeffer on behalf of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres de Paris.\textsuperscript{154} They have aided scholars in achieving a more comprehensive understanding of both the Canaanite and the Phoenician pantheons,\textsuperscript{155} which have collectives of similar gods and goddesses. The prominent text *The Baal Cycle* is a group of clay tablets amalgamated into one long

\textsuperscript{153} Wakeman 1985, 19.

\textsuperscript{154} Virolleaud 1957; Kapelrud 1965; Yon 2006.

\textsuperscript{155} The Phoenician pantheon, although incredibly similar, does have many different versions of the god Baal and his consort, which Jezebel's homeland would have venerated, that will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Additionally, this section is only analysing Anat/Anath.
commentary, featuring major Canaanite gods and goddesses such as El, Baal, Anat and Mot.\textsuperscript{156}

Anat unquestionably fits the category of 'feisty' and 'outstanding' women and she is portrayed in many myths as "a ruthless warrior who glories in bloodshed and exults in slaughter."\textsuperscript{157} Neal Walls explains Anat was "an independent and unrestrained female in the divine realm, [and] the Maiden Anat plays an active role in the Ugaritic myths."\textsuperscript{158} What is important to note here is that Anat was not the weak female partner or consort, but a warrior in her own right, a real war goddess, who engaged in masculine pursuits. However, at times she became part of a fearsome warrior unit with Baal.\textsuperscript{159} In this sense she is akin to the Hindu goddesses Kali and Durga, the Amazons and Valkyries, and the Greek goddesses Athena and Artemis, who all share some of the same characteristics.\textsuperscript{160}

Anat had many epithets. She was known as the Lady of the Mountain, Anat Strength of Life, Anat the Destroyer, Lady, Virgin Anat (\textit{btlt 'nt}) and Fairest Daughter-Sister of Baal.\textsuperscript{161} She was worshipped over a great area, stretching from Anatolia to Egypt and Mesopotamia to Phoenicia.\textsuperscript{162} She was famously acknowledged as the goddess of war, but akin to Inanna, she was also perceived as the goddess of love and fecundity in the guise of a maiden, and occasionally "a pubescent female, who served as a wet nurse to humans of royal descent."\textsuperscript{163} Walls states that "in particular, the combination of feminine and masculine attributes in Anat's mythic character demonstrates her

\textsuperscript{157} Walls 1992, 1.
\textsuperscript{158} Walls 1992, 1.
\textsuperscript{159} Karpelrud 1969, 115; see also Smith 2001, 41–66, 104–130.
\textsuperscript{160} Walls 1992, 26–38
\textsuperscript{161} Karpelrud 1965, 63; see also 1969, 51; White 2013, 15 October. [http://www.pantheon.org/articles/a/anat.html].
\textsuperscript{162} Karpelrud 1969, 114.
\textsuperscript{163} Walls 1992, 1.
ambiguous identity. Anat's apparent disdain for domestic responsibility and rejection of an exclusively feminine social identity demonstrates the importance of gender to her symbolic identity. 

Although it appears that Anat's violence is intense, and unrestrained, there is a reason for her actions. For example, Anat's act of eliminating Mot, god of the Netherworld, allows Baal to return and the earth to become fertile again.

Anat fought in all the theatres of war, "she took part in fighting wherever she could find it, in the West, at the seashore, as well as in the East, in the lands of the sunrise." Her tempestuous nature is displayed in the myth KTU I.2, ii 1–42, where Anat, again much like Inanna, adorns herself before joining her warriors in battle. Victor Matthews and Don Benjamin explain this myth as an analogy to the celebration of the grape harvest: whilst Anat is knee-deep in the blood of her enemies, the farmers of Ugarit would have been knee-deep in the juice of their grapes.

Anat wages a fierce battle on the plain,
She slaughters the armies of two cities,
She vanquishes soldiers from the seacoast in the west,
She destroys soldiers from the east.
Their heads lie like clods of soil under her feet,
Their hands mat like locusts in a swarm around her.
She strings their heads to make a necklace,
She weaves their hands to make a belt.
She wades up to her knees in warriors' blood,
She stands up to her thighs in their guts.
With her arrows she routs seasoned warriors,
With her bow she turns back veterans.

Anat returns to her sanctuary,
The divine warrior returns to the house of Anat.
The fierce battle on the plain was not enough for her,
With the slaughter of two armies, she was not content.
So, she stacks up crates to be enemy soldiers,
She sets up tables to be warriors, crushing vats to be heroes.

164 Walls 1992, 2.
165 Kapelrud 1969, 52.
166 Matthews and Benjamin 2006, 264; see also Pardee 1997.
Once again, Anat fights with vigour,
Once again she slaughters every enemy in sight.
Anat's body trembles with joy; she gloats with triumph,
Again she wades knee-deep in warriors blood,
She stands up to her thighs in their guts.
Finally, these deadly games are enough for her.
With the slaughter in her arena she is content.167
—KTU 1.3–1.4, ii 5–30 Baal's Palace

After the bloodshed, Anat ritually cleanses herself and her house. She pretends the entire event never transpired, and is restored to the valiant maiden.168

Later in this section of the myth, Baal complains to Anat that he does not have his own sanctuary or place of worship like the other gods, and therefore has to live with his parents El and Athirat.169 Incensed by this revelation, Anat argues and makes threats on behalf of Baal to their father El:

And [Virgin Anat] said:
Bull El [my father] will give me an answer,
he will give me an answer,
or [I shall give him an answer]:
[I] shall trample him like a lamb to the ground,
[I shall make] his gray hair run with blood,
the gray hair of his beard [with gore],
if he does not give a house to Baal like the gods...170
—KYU 1.3–1.4, iv–52, v 1–4 Baal's Palace

In the finale of this section, Baal is finally given his own palace, and throws a lavish feast for the gods but forgets to invite Mot, or to send him gifts of esteem. Mot in an act of revenge invites Baal to dine with him in the Underworld, serving him the food of the dead, thus killing Baal, whom he eventually eats (KTU 1.5–1.6: Baal and Mot).171 This is when another characteristic of Anat emerges. She has been identified by scholars as the goddess of lamentation and mourning.172 Arvid Kapelrud points out

168 Kapelrud 1969, 51.
169 Athirat was an Ugaritic goddess evolving later into Asherah and she has been linked by scholars to the Israelite god, Yahweh, which will be explained in subsequent chapters. see Cassuto 1971, 58–9.
170 Wyatt 1998, 84; see also Pritchard 1969, 129–148.
that in *The Baal Cycle* when Mot kills Baal, and also when Anat causes Aqhat's death (AQHT A), the goddess is the initiator and performer of the necessary ritual of mourning, with weeping lamentations, loud cries, ceremonies with ritual sacrifice and the laceration of her own body.

Her skin with a stone she scored,
her side-locks [with a razor],
she gashed her cheeks and chin.
She [ploughed] her collar-bones,
she turned over like a garden her chest,
like a valley she ploughed her breast.

—KTU 1.6, i.1–6 *Baal and Mot*

In her grief, a kinder, gentler side of Anat emerges: "as the heart of a cow towards her calf, as the heart of a ewe towards her lamb, so is the heart of Anat towards Baal" (KTU 1.6. ii 7–9). However, this is only a momentary setback for this feisty goddess in the myth. Anat searches high and low through the Netherworld for Baal, and eventually loses patience with Mot and his sly comments. In a fit of typical rage and anger:

She seized the divine Mot.
With a knife she split him;
with a fan she winnowed him;
with fire she burnt him;
with millstones she ground him;
<with a sieve she sifted him;>
on the steppe <she abandoned him;
in the sea> she sowed him.

—KTU 1.6., ii 31–35.

Baal is restored to earth, Mot is eventually reincarnated, Anat is praised for her valiant and passionate actions, and the balance of Heaven and the Netherworld returns.

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173 The Myth of Aqhat sees Danel with no son, and the gods' take pity on him and he receives Aqhat. He is given by a deity a bow, in which Anat covets and unsuccessfully tries to steal, somehow between the two fighting over the bow, it is broken and falls in to the sea and Aqhat dies, with his blood on Anats hand's. See Pritchard 1969, 149–155; Pardee 1997, 1333–56.
176 Kapelrud 1965, 38; see also 1969, 92–3.
There is one more distinguishing feature of Anat that should be addressed, which relates to her role as the virgin maiden and fertility. In the shorter myth KTU 1:10, known as *Baal, the Heifer, and Anat*, we read of Baal copulating with a cow, which in turn arouses Anat to passion. Baal notices that she is the loveliest of his sisters, and additionally, a virgin maiden. He lusts after her, and eventually they have intercourse. The theme of Anat and Baal's sexual desire for one another continues in the fragment KTU 1.11: 1–8, in which Baal becomes aroused and "grasps [Anat] by the belly," causing her to become aroused, "and [she] grasped him by the penis," at which point the text entreats them, "Embrace, conceive and give birth, [in the grace, and the beauty] of the band of the Korharat." 

Anat's personality, like that of many goddesses, was one of extremes. Predominantly, she was a fearsome bloodthirsty warrior, yet on occasions she could be the kind and gentle virgin maiden, or the instigator of mourning. Like Inanna, this feisty warrior goddess operated in both the feminine and masculine spheres of society. It appears that it was deemed acceptable for some goddesses—especially of war and fertility—to transgress the typical boundaries and proscribed functions which dictated the conduct of women in the different societies of the ancient Near East.

**Nitocris the Egyptian: Twenty-Third Century BCE**

A queen named Nitocris actually did exist in Egyptian records (the Turin papyrus). Manetho, a third-century BCE Egyptian priest, in his *Aegyptiaca* (History of Egypt), records that the ancient Egyptian king lists placed her after Pepi I in the sixth dynasty (c. 2300 BCE). She is described by Manetho as being of fair complexion and the

bravest and most beautiful woman of her time. He adds that she was said to have built the third Pyramid and reigned 12 years. Her actions almost make her a semi-mythic figure; and the most important undertaking was retribution of a sinister and dark kind against her brother's murderers. She invited them to a banquet in an underground chamber, and whilst they were feasting, let in a river and drowned them. Nitocris then threw herself into a room full of embers, and died (Hdt. 2.100.2–4). She was also the first known female ruler of Egypt, "a woman instead of a man," but she certainly wasn't the last.

Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt: Fifteenth Century BCE

"If Hapi, the god of the Nile, can have breasts,  
I can have a beard.  
I live in the perfect justice of opposites.  
I wear the stiff kingly skirt,  
The elaborate wig with the serpent,  
On my forehead,  
The double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt  
And a small straight beard  
Tied on with linen thread,  
As did all the kings before me"
—Ruth Whitman, Hatshepsut.

Hatshepsut was an important figure, that in contemporary society has become an almost semi-divine figure within Egyptian history, and her story somewhat parallels Jezebel's life—which is why she will be focused on here in more detail. However, instead of using her story as a deterrent, as the Bible did in regard to Jezebel, Hatshepsut's successors wiped out all evidence of her existence. Thankfully, in 1922–1923CE, excavations carried out by the Metropolitan Museum of Art resulted in the

179 Newberry 1943, 51–54.  
182 Murray (1924, 13) lists her other names as Hatasu, Hasheosowe, Hatshopsitu, Hatchepsut, Hatshepsuit and Maatkare (her throne name).
'Hatshepsut Hole', where a massive cache of statues and Hathor votives bearing the
name Hatshepsut were found.\textsuperscript{183} More evidence was excavated at Dier el-Bahri, and
archaeologists and historians have now been able to piece together most of
Hatshepsut's life. In Egypt, four queens (Neith-Hotep, Her-Neith, Meryt-Neith and
Nemaathep) left enough archaeological evidence to confirm that women of high birth
could wield real power. One of these women, Meryt-Neith, may even have been a
queen regnant rather than a consort.\textsuperscript{184}

Hatshepsut ruled in the eighteenth dynasty for over 20 years (c. 1473–1458 BCE).
She lived in a literate age, yet belonged to a society which did not believe in keeping
personal written records.\textsuperscript{185} The 'traditional' view of Hatshepsut (in the late
nineteenth–early twentieth century) demonised her character and viewed her as an
overly ambitious woman who wrested authority from her stepson/nephew, a usurper
who transgressed traditional Egyptian cultural and religious boundaries, and finally a
scheming, manipulative woman who—much like Jezebel—lusted after power,
suppressing her stepson/nephew's rule for 20 years.\textsuperscript{186}

Hatshepsut was born the eldest daughter of King Tuthmosis I (c. 1554–1512 BCE),
was married to her brother—as was the archetypal practice for Egyptian royalty—and
also had the role of guardian of her young stepson/nephew Tuthmosis III.\textsuperscript{187} Once
married, new queens would be accorded extra titles such as the 'King's Daughter',
'King's Sister', or 'King's Great Wife',\textsuperscript{188} and they routinely owned personal estates,

\textsuperscript{183} Arnold 2005, 292.
\textsuperscript{184} Tyldesley 1994, Chapters 6 and 7.
\textsuperscript{185} For example, there are no diaries, memoirs or intimate letters which Hatshepsut wrote. See Tyldesley 1996, 4.
\textsuperscript{186} Davies 2004, 55; see also Roehrig, Drefus and Keller 2005, 4.
\textsuperscript{187} Tyldesley 1996, 1.
\textsuperscript{188} Shaw 2002, 228.
which came complete with land, servants and administrators. As a typical Egyptian consort, Hatshepsut was a conformist wife and mother, paying due honour to both her husband and her stepson/nephew, loving her only daughter, and being content with the traditional role which was allotted to Egyptian royal women.

As a queen consort her duties included providing her husband with as many heirs as possible, as it was the queens, not the kings, who were to provide Egypt with an unbroken succession which lasted for over a century from Queen Tetisheri (c. 1545 BCE). Hatshepsut remained a passive complement to her husband and ensured the smooth running of the palace, providing silent support for her husband's actions. It must be emphasised here that at no stage during her husband's reign did Hatshepsut transgress any boundaries; she behaved in an exemplary fashion. Tuthmosis II was commander-in-chief of the army, defending the borders of Egypt, and thus he was away for long periods of time, entrusting his rule to his administrators. His wife/consort Hatshepsut, who was also royally educated from birth in the affairs of government, would have learnt much about the running of the State.

As Hayes suggests, "At the time of her husband, [Tuthmosis II's] death, her every waking thought must have been taken up with the stabilisation of the government and the consolidation of her own position." With Tuthmosis' II passing and a national crisis awakening, Hatshepsut appropriated the running of the state, as the only son in

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189 Brier and Hobbs 2008, 76–77; see also Tyldesley 1996, 45.
190 Tyldesley 1996, 112.
191 Brewer and Teeter (2012, 19 January, http://www.fathom.com/course/21701778/session2.html) state this was also important because the child mortality rate (one third surviving) in Egypt peaked at five years old, meaning if children reached five without any issues it was usually assumed that they would live a full life. See also Meyers 1988, 112.
192 Redford 2011, 526; see also Tyldesley 1996, 42.
193 Blumsom 2013, 72–74; see also Tyldesley 1996, 45.
195 Hayes 1935, 144.
line to inherit the throne was much too young to rule. Egyptologist Joyce Tyldesley interestingly states that Hatshepsut must have been deemed an acceptable replacement as "no pharaoh could hope to rule without the support of the relatively small circle of male elite who headed the army, the civil service and the priesthood. These men were the men who effectively controlled the country and kept the king in power." Yet, debatably, Hatshepsut would have been the only suitable replacement and they simply had to accept the situation. Furthermore, in ancient Egypt, it bears reminding that decisive behaviour was deemed acceptable and even encouraged in a female if her actions were intended to safeguard the rights of either a husband or a child, or of the nation.

Hatshepsut was the first pharaoh to create a story of her own divine conception and birth, which set a precedent for all future rulers of Egypt. This story was basically another form of political and religious propaganda, carved in tasteful images and monumental inscriptions on the north side of the middle portico at the front of her personal temple at Deir el-Bahri. In this story, she claimed divine descent, being formed by the gods themselves, and endowed with beauty and a body more glorious than a god's. Hatshepsut's filial relationship with her heavenly 'father', Amun, was always deemed by her and her people to be pivotal to her rule, and she took every opportunity to give due acknowledgement to him, promoting his cult and taking part in ritual activities relating to it.

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197 Tyldesley 1996, 58.
198 Keller 2005, 296; see also Tyldesley 1996, 102.
199 Murray 1924, 53.
200 Blunsom 2013, 72–77; see also Tyldesley 1996, 102.
Once Tuthmosis III was old enough to rule, instead of handing over the crown, Hatshepsut did something unexpected; she announced a co-regency, which did not conclude until he was in his early twenties. The period of the co-regency was known as a stable time in Egypt—the most memorable event was not a war but the royally sponsored expedition to the land of Punt. This enterprise was undertaken to obtain incense and other costly and precious materials for the cult of Amun-Re at Karnak, and when the boat returned overflowing with exotic and rare animals, metals and plants, the people of Egypt rejoiced. It was forever remembered as the most successful trading expedition ever to have been undertaken—and it took place on the orders of a woman. 

Egypt had prospered under the rule of Hatshepsut; however, after more than two decades as primary ruler, Hatshepsut, pharaoh and co-regent, quite literally 'disappeared' from history. After her death in 1458 BCE, at the great age of 50, a serious attempt was made to obliterate her name and associated iconography throughout Egypt. Hatshepsut was deleted from the king lists, her monuments were desecrated, smashed and flung into rubbish pits and often her figure in icons was replaced by a depiction of an inanimate object (for example, a table of offerings). 

This removal of the name or image of a deceased person from the public record, what the Romans termed damnatio memoriae, served a dual purpose: firstly, it allowed the re-writing of history and secondly, it was a direct assault upon the spirit of the deceased. An outdated but popular argument of the 1930s, put forward by historian William Hayes, was that the action of damnatio memoriae was due to Tuthmosis III's

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201 This is a debatable point as, for example, Tutankhamun was nine when he became pharaoh, Ramses II was around 24 when he ascended the throne and Khufu was in his early twenties. However, Tuthmosis III was 21 when Hatshepsut died, leaving him the sole regnancy of Egypt, See Dreyfus et al. 2005.
203 Marshall Cavendish Co. 2011, 34.
204 Roth 2005, 280.
humiliating subordination to a woman, and the long and bitter struggle to control Egypt. As a result, Hayes argues, when he came into independent power, loathing his aunt, he ordered the destruction of everything reminding him of her.²⁰⁵

Recent scholarship has revised this theory and now suggests three possible motives for the erasures: 1) that, in line with Hayes' theory, Hatshepsut was personally hated by Tuthmosis III because she had assumed kingship; 2) that although no break occurred when Tuthmosis III assumed the throne, Hatshepsut was the last of her bloodline, the Ahmoside line, which points to the legitimisation of Amenhotep II;²⁰⁶ or 3) that the existence of a female king—a successful female king—was too much of a threat and could set a dangerous precedent and thus the concept of female kingship was rejected and all evidence of it erased.²⁰⁷ Tuthmosis III may have found it advisable to remove all traces of this unconventional female king, whose reign may possibly have been interpreted as a grave offence against ma'at. Hatshepsut's 'crime' needs to have been nothing more than the fact she was female and so posed a threat to her generation, and the future of the nation.

Hatshepsut is a fine example of how a woman could become a successful king. In the words of Wallis Budge, "[although] unmentioned in the Egyptian king lists, [she] as much deserves to be commemorated among the great monarchs of Egypt as any king or queen who ever sat on the throne during the 18th Dynasty."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ Roth 2005, 281.
²⁰⁷ Roth 2005, 269, 281.
²⁰⁸ Budge 1902, 1.
Deborah and Jael of Israel: Twelfth Century BCE

If the Bible was indeed based on fact, a mortal woman named Deborah was a prophetess and leader of the Hebrew people, determined by scholars, with the aid of the Bible, to have lived around 1200 BCE. She was considered by the Israelite people to be a very unusual and powerful woman. She was a judge for her people, who came to seek her advice and rulings on community disputes. Due to the Hebrews' oppression by Jabin, a Canaanite king, they petitioned their Lord God for help. The Lord told them to take an army to Mount Tabor and Deborah agreed, but prophesied that the "Lord will hand Sisera [commander of Jabin's army] over to a woman" (Judges 4:11). Upon seeing the army, a terrified Sisera fled and found some locals to aid him. Jael and her husband, who had forsaken their tribe (which was friendly to Sisera), spotted Sisera, who asked Jael to feed, water and hide him in her tent. Jael acquiesced, but subsequently put a tent peg through his head into the ground with a hammer, thus saving the Hebrews from oppression (Judges 4:21). Both Jael and Deborah were regarded as heroes, aiding the Israelites in their fight for freedom.

Queen Twosre of Egypt: Twelfth Century BCE

The historical figure of Twosre reigned from c. 1191–1190 BCE (19th dynasty) and was primarily known as the last female king of Egypt. Egyptologist Alan Gardiner referred to her as a "most remarkable woman," who, after the death of her husband Seti II, was regent on behalf of her stepson Siptah. After Siptah's brief reign of five or six years, Twosre assumed the crown of Egypt for herself and ruled for a year. Her burial was most unusual, as she was allocated a personal tomb rather than sharing that

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of her husband. Only one other female king/pharaoh of Egypt, Hatshepsut, was buried with other kings in the Valley of the Kings; Hatshepsut and Twosre were buried there not because they were married to kings but because they were kings in their own right. It has been stated that Twosre ruled Egypt with the help of her chancellor, called Bay, and as such she was merely a figurehead, but recent evidence attests that she was queen in her own right. French Egyptologist Pierre Grandet provides evidence that Bay was executed on the orders of Siptah (Twosre's son/stepson) in the fifth year of his reign.

Dido of Phoenicia: Ninth Century BCE

Dido's legend was a matter of political as well as personal consequence. If she did exist, it was more in the capacity of a semi-mythic figure, she was a Phoenician princess and, coincidently, the grandniece of Jezebel, another powerful Phoenician princess, whose daughter, Athaliah, would seize the crown of Israel (2 Kings 11:3). It appears that a prevailing theme of these outstanding women is that they all had many facets to their characters. Dido can be portrayed as a lovelorn heroine (Ovid), a symbol of chastity (Jerome), or a heroic warrior queen who founded a city. Alternatively, she can be seen as conniving, greedy, sly and duplicitous. Her brother Pygmalion is her blood—and her king. Pygmalion murdered her husband, yet rather than reciprocating, she acts shrewdly and damages her brother in a most painful fashion—by taking the royal treasure, leaving him with nothing. Her duty is to the

211 Bunson 2002, 111.
213 Monti 1981, 40.
214 “You set before me the joys of wedlock. I for my part will remind you of Dido's sword and pyre and funeral flames. In marriage there is not so much good to be hoped for as there is evil which may happen and must be feared. Passion when indulged always brings repentance with it; it is never satisfied, and once quenched it is soon kindled anew.” Jerome (trans. Fremantle 1893, 14:3308) illustrates with Dido the consequences of remarrying and the heroism of Dido's chaste ways (although ending in suicide). See also Virgil (trans. West 1990, iv. 32–34: 548, 552), Ovid (trans. Simpson 2001, 432–4).
royal household, yet she deceives Pygmalion nonetheless (departing without a trace in the dark of night) and leaves him bereft. She then founds an entirely new city of wealth, Carthage, which became a hub of the ancient Near Eastern world. Although her actions point to her being a warrior woman, taking upon herself a man's mantle of leader, explorer and colonist, Dido died simply a woman who refused to be forced into marrying someone she didn't love, as he would control both her lands and her body. In other words, "she would rather kill herself than fall prey to her political enemies." Dido's demise was public, jumping out of the window into the funeral pyre which she had built under the pretence of her burning all of her deceased husband's possessions.

Many scholars in antiquity, (especially around the time of Jerome [c. fourth century CE]) still found it difficult to comprehend "that a woman," and more so a widow in the royal blood line, "supposedly led the Phoenicians in their emigration to a new colony: a female, they contend[ed], is unlikely to be the principal figure in a foundation myth." Yet there is evidence of strong, influential woman running in the Phoenician line (including Jezebel and Athaliah), perhaps due to the freedom bestowed upon them within the royal courts.

Queen Semiramis of Assyria: Ninth Century BCE

In ancient Mesopotamia, the term 'queen' was only applied to goddesses and women who served as rulers. From texts it is understood that during the last period of the

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216 Monti 1981, 40.
217 Saint Jerome was an Illyrian Latin Christian priest, and also a theologian and historian, who provided popular (for the time) commentary on many myths (both biblical and non-biblical). He had no love for women such as Jezebel (as will be addressed in upcoming chapters) due to his calling in life, with many 'bad' biblical women becoming further perverted and chastised in his influential writings. For further information see Jerome 1893 (trans. Fremantle); see also Kelly (1975).
218 Gera 1997, 137.
Neo-Assyrian Kingdom (911–627 BCE), the influence of the king's spouse and mother was politically important. Semiramis or Shammuramat, a semi-divine debeatably, mythical figure was known as the legendary widow of King Shamshi-Adad V. Her tale originates in Mesopotamia, although none of her legend survives in the Mesopotamian cuneiform writings. Anatolian Greek author and physician Ctesias (c. late fifth century BCE) learnt of her history on his travels with Atarxerxes II of Persia. Within his writings, he utilised powerful women such as the Assyrian queen as models to describe other powerful queens of the ancient Near East. Semiramis was the mythical/historical paradigm for powerful women within the ancient Near East who defied their ordained roles. The mythological aspects of Semiramis were elaborated by Greek 'historian' Diodorus Siculus (90–30 BCE).

After her second husband's death Sammuramat was said to have become the exclusive sovereign of the country (c. 811–809 BCE) on behalf of her young son. She took many lovers but never another husband. After her son's coronation she retained her office as queen and was indicated on many monuments along with the king. Many Greek legends were penned about her 'lustful' personality, and her deeds were somewhat overstated, in a similar way to the later stories relating to Jezebel. Pliny (CE 61) eroticised her as a lascivious woman that once even had intercourse with a horse (HN 8.64)! According to a Greek (pre-Pliny) legend, Semiramis was born part mortal and part god, and the king, although he knew she was married, lusted over

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220 Oppenheim 1964, 105.
221 Gera 1997, 67.
222 Semiramis was widely identified with many roles: wife, queen, conqueror, builder, innovator, warrior, mother, and lover, and was also a combination of the immortal goddess Inanna/Ishtar; see Gera 1997, 65.
224 Today, we would be unlikely to classify Diodorus' writings as historical, as he incorporated mythological births, fights and gods into his narratives.
225 See tablet ACT 194c in Oppenheim 1964, 359.
226 Lewis 2011, 9 September, 1. [http://womenshistory.about.com/od/ancientqueens/a/semiramis.htm]
227 Baharani 2001, 176; see also McCall 1998, 184.
her. He caused her first husband to commit suicide, which left her free to marry the king.\footnote{Ctesias 2010, Books 1–3 Chapter 5, 1–4.} She asked her new husband if she could be king for a day, he allowed it, and she deviously had him executed. According to Ctesias, she then took the throne, which was eventually handed over to her son when he was of age.\footnote{Ctesias 2010, Books 1–3 Chapter 7, 1–5.} When her son was wounded in battle, disguised as him she tricked his army into following her orders; however, Semiramis was eventually murdered by her offspring.\footnote{Ctesias 2010, Books 1–3 Chapter 20, 1–3} Semiramis was also considered a great builder, creating many fortifications (Hdt. 1.184) and was (according to Ctesias) the founder of Babylon.\footnote{Ctesias 2010, Books 1–3, Chapter 7, 1–5.}

Macedonian strategist and author Polyaenus (c. second century CE) wrote that Semiramis represented a powerful and proud female warrior, capable of the equivalent of heroic male deeds. He claimed that she received intelligence of the revolt of the Siracians while she was in her bath and without waiting to have her sandals put on or her hair dressed, she immediately left and took to the field (Strat. 8:26). Her exploits were recorded on pillars, in Polyaenus' powerful words:

\begin{quote}
Nature made me a woman, but I have raised myself to rivalry with the greatest of men. I swayed the sceptre of Ninus; and extended my dominions to the river Hinamames on the east; on the south, to the country which is fragrant with the production of frankincense and myrrh; and northward to the Saccae and Sogdians. No Assyrian before me ever saw the sea; but distant as the seas are from here, I have seen four. And to their proud waves who can set bounds? I have directed the course of rivers at my will; and my will has directed them where they might prove useful. I have made a barren land produce plenty, and fertilised it with my rivers. I have built walls which are impregnable; and with iron forced a way through inaccessible rocks. At great expense I have formed roads in places, which before not even the wild beasts could traverse. And great and various as my exploits have been, I have always found
\end{quote}
leisure hours, in which to indulge myself and my friends (Strat. 8:26).

Nitocris the Babylonian: Seventh Century BCE

Nitocris was a mortal queen and was an incredibly talented architect and engineer. In a time when stability was needed, she transgressed her position as a woman to take on the mantle of a king protecting the people. She was not a warrior, but more so an architect, erecting monumental buildings for the protection of her people. As queen she constructed many fortifications and colossal waterworks, changing, as Herodotus remarks, the course of the river Euphrates,

which flows through the middle of her city; [which] had been straight before; but by digging canals higher up she made the river so crooked that its course now passes one of the Assyrian villages three times...the current might be slower because of the many windings that broke its force, and that the passages to Babylon might be crooked, and that right after them should come also the long circuit of the lake (Hdt. 1.185.4).

As queen she displayed intelligence and purpose, acting for the good of her people by creating these works, providing protection from invaders, generating increased trade with neighbouring cities, and providing easier access for citizens to move around the city. Sadly, however, Nitocris was her own worst enemy: her tomb, untouched until the late fifth century BCE, had words on it stating, "If one of the rulers of Babylon after me is in need of money, let him open my tomb and take however much he likes. But if he is not in need, may he under no circumstances open it; otherwise it will not be well for him" (Hdt. 1.187.2). Her tomb was breached when the city fell to King Darius of Persia (521–486 BCE). Interesting theories presented by recent scholars include that Nitocris was the wife of Nebuchadnezzar (c. 630–562 BCE), the most
powerful neo-Babylonian king; or that she was Semiramis; or Naqi'a (c. 700 BCE),
the powerful wife of Sennacherib (and mother of Esarhaddon).  

Queen Rhodogune of the Persians: Sixth Century BCE

Historically, bar Herodotus' work on Rhodogune, there is no other evidence for an
independent female ruler in Persia, yet Persian women had some of the greatest
economic freedom in the region and often played an active public role within the
royal court. Rhodogune was the Persian warrior queen, based on myth, rather than
reality and the fundamental point of her story was that she was involved in a
'womanly' task—braiding her hair—which was put on hold so that she could preserve
her empire by quashing a military rebellion. Deborah Gera states that "the two halves
of the queen's head—one neatly braided and arranged, and the other left unkempt and
flying loose—symbolise or point to the two sides of her personality, the cool rational
commander and the wild fighting woman." She was a liminal figure, on the
borderline between civilisation and Amazon-like 'uniqueness', like most of the other
outstanding women discussed in this chapter. Socrates, during an argument about
women's position in society, even complimented Rhodogune's exemplary warrior
prowess and successful leadership qualities, which placed her on a similar footing to
exceptional men.

232 Ravn 1942, 76; see also Lewy 1952; Kuhrt 1982, 543.
233 Gera 1997, 8. For further information on Persian women of the royal court, see Brosius 1996.
236 Or more specifically, women as educators in areas where they have experience.
Queen Vashti and Queen Esther of Israel: Fifth Century BCE

The Bible unequivocally rejects Vashti, King Ahasuerus' first wife, due to her disrespectful behaviour towards her husband. Queen Vashti refused an order of the king to appear before him and his officials so they could gaze upon her beauty (Esther 1:12). The sight of this beautiful woman, whom the king calls his own, would have given the men in attendance a sense of his power and wealth, and would consequently have reminded them of their own power as males within the imperial hierarchy.\(^{238}\) Vashti's refusal worries the men, as "according to law, because she did not obey the command of King Ahasuerus...the queen's behaviour will become known to all women, so that they will despise their husbands in their eyes" (Esther 1:15, 17). It was the wives' duty to obey their husbands, the males thus displaying their dominance.\(^{239}\) Vashti's behaviour was considered a serious threat to the Israelite society of her time and had to be dealt with harshly by removing her as an example to other women thinking of disobeying their husbands/masters. Vashti's story within the Bible (in the Book of Esther) provided a contrast to the story of Ahasuerus' second wife, Esther. Vashti was not a model to follow, but a model of what happens if women rebel—that is, they are cast off!\(^{240}\)

Israelite Queen Esther (if she did indeed exist) lived around the fifth century BCE and was applauded for using her femininity (one might even say her 'feminine wiles') to plead the case of the Jewish people to her husband, the king, as her people were going to be massacred under the orders of the king's prime minister, Haman the Agagite (enemy of the Jews) (Esth. 3:13). Esther exercised her status as the wife of King

\(^{238}\) Butting 2012, 207.
\(^{239}\) Butting 2012, 213.
\(^{240}\) Laffey 2001, 56.
Ahasuerus to gain an audience with her husband to save the Jews from this terrible fate (Esther 5:2). She was regarded as a hero to her people, and although she employed less than 'honourable' ways to achieve her aims, this was interpreted as her sacrifice, made to save her people—the 'people of God'—from a horrible fate. Esther was incredibly clever as she obtained her goal by playing by the rules; in a man's world she played a man's game.

**Conclusion**

These few selected mortal, semi-mythic women and goddesses from various civilisations in the ancient Near East held substantial power either because their husbands passed away and left them in a situation in which they had to transcend their normal 'womanly' roles, or because they had to intervene for the stability of the nation, for the good of the people. Amongst them, only Rhodogune and Nitocris were rulers in their own right. In comparison to Jezebel, all these women (except Vashti) disregarded their law codes through need and so were seen as outstanding in a positive way and deemed 'heroic' by the authors who recorded their stories. By contrast, Jezebel and Vashti were castigated and denounced within the Bible, due to their defiance and for flouting Biblical codes of law. Now we come to the villainous or misunderstood Jezebel herself, her life, and her downfall as depicted within the pages of the Bible.
Chapter Three:

Jezebel: What's in a Name? A Narrative of Jezebel from the Bible with Commentary, and her Historical Transformation to the Biblical Harlot

One of the worst that was ever on earth
Was Jezebel, as stories relate;
For in the Bible you may both see and hear
That she oppressed a great many holy prophets
And wrought great confusion among the people,
Because she slew innocent Naboth for his vineyard;
But dogs drank her blood and gnawed her bones.\textsuperscript{241}

\textsuperscript{241} Ziolkowski 1989, 5.

Figure 9: Painting of Jezebel (from Biography 2014).
This chapter focuses on Jezebel—the so-called Israelite political casualty—as a princess, queen and queen mother, and it serves two purposes. Firstly and primarily it is a navigation through her highly illustrious and tumultuous life up until her death (which will be analysed in Chapter Five); and secondly, it is a commentary on both her role and the socio-political and religious standing of Israel and its law codes in comparison to its neighbours and counterparts in the ancient Near East. The 'historical' Jezebel was born into royalty, and her functions were clear cut and ascribed from birth. She was to serve and promote Baal in her capacity as a priestess of his cult, and she was to be a pawn in a strategically and politically motivated marriage which served to strengthen her father's reign and his ties to neighbouring countries, specifically, Israel.

Archaeological Evidence

Unfortunately, there are few primary texts which can be analysed in regard to Jezebel. However, a substantial quantity of historical and archaeological research has been undertaken in the last century in Jezebel's homeland, Phoenicia—modern-day Lebanon. Due to Lebanon's geographical location and the recent wars there, some areas, but not all, are unable to be accessed. Recent archaeological excavations in historical Phoenicia have included those at present-day Beirut; Mina el Hosn; Tyre;

242 According to Aubet (1993, 93) Phoenician inscriptions mention both priests and priestesses, and show that at specific times priesthoods remained within a particular family for several generations, which was considered a Semitic trait, as it was the custom in many ancient Near Eastern countries such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Israel. In regards to Israel, originally God designated who was worthy to serve in the tabernacle and established a hereditary succession for future generations for the position of high priest (See Walton, Matthews and Chavalas 2000, 108–9). Furthermore, Alice Keefe states "Throughout the ancient Near East, the relationship between the king and priestly class was symbiotic, as 'rulers endorsed and were endorsed by endowed temple organisations run by the hereditary priestly families" (Keefe 2001, 86); see also Coote and Ord 1991, 30.

243 Directed by archaeologist Hisham Sayegh in 2011 (page updated 2013, June 14). For further information, see http://www.fanoos.com/research/phoenician_port_in_beirut_mina_el_hosn.html.
south-west Lebanon;\textsuperscript{244} and Tel Dor in modern-day Israel, between Tel Aviv and Haifa.\textsuperscript{245}

\textsuperscript{244} Directed by Claude Doumet Serhal (British Museum) in 2012 (page updated 2014, 20 November). For further information, see http://www.sidonexcavation.com.

\textsuperscript{245} Directed by Ilan Sharon and Ayelet Gilboa in 2011 (page updated 2014, 19 November). For further information, see http://dor.huji.ac.il.
Evidence of Phoenician Trade During Jezebel's Lifetime

In Jezebel's times (c. ninth century BCE), Phoenicia had a very lucrative trade network and crafts industry, making Jezebel an attractive marriage proposition. The evidence of this comes from archaeological and textual sources from countries across the ancient Near East. The famous poem by Ezekiel in the Bible attests to the widely dispersed trade network which Phoenicia controlled:

Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of goods; they exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise. Greece, Tubal and Meshek did business with you; they traded human beings and articles of bronze for your wares (Ezekiel 27:12–13).246

It is important to note that whilst the Phoenicians' trade network expanded, their colonies located near ports around the Mediterranean and ancient Near East retained the religions and customs of their homeland, rather than taking on those of the lands they were in.247 The Phoenicians utilised large port cities, which were neutral meeting places for traders and for hostile states that nonetheless continued to carry on long-distance trade with each other.248 Egypt, Syria, Babylonia and Israel procured timber from Phoenician ports (the forests were in the mountains of Lebanon) and had it delivered by sea, as that was more economical than overland transport. The Assyrians also utilised Phoenician cedars for building purposes, as documented by an inscription, dated to around the later ninth century BCE, on the Balawat gates which protected the palace of Assyrian king, Shalmaneser III:249 “I marched unto Mount Lebanon and cut down beams of cedar, cypresses and juniper, with the beams of cedar

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246 The poem is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix B (page 161).
247 Moscati 1965, 31; see also Aubet and Turton 2001.
248 Redman 1978, 211; see also Aubet and Turton 2001.
249 LeMon 2014, 383.
I roofed this temple, door-leaves of cedar I fashioned, and with a sheathing (bands) of copper I bound them, and I hung them in its gates.\textsuperscript{250}

These vital relations concerning inland and coastal resources (especially between Israel and Phoenicia) were indicated in the Bible by an agreement between Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre (1 Kings 5:6), which involved the trading of cedar wood to build Solomon's temple for annual supplies of wheat and oil:\textsuperscript{251} "So give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set. You know that we have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Tyreians" (1 Kings 6). Hiram replied, "I have received the message you sent me and will do all you want in providing the cedar and pine logs. My men will haul them down from Lebanon to the sea, and I will float them in rafts by sea to the place you specify. There I will separate them and you can take them away. And you are to grant my wish by providing food for my royal household" (1 Kings 5:8). The Phoenicians were also masters of textile colouring, ivory carving and woodworking, and they were skilled architcets too.

\textsuperscript{250} Balawat in Moscati 1965, 16. Hiram's daughter was also one of Solomon's 'Sidonian' wives, thus further strengthening the connection between Phoenicia and Israel, see Frankenstein 1979, 267.
\textsuperscript{251} Sherratt 1993, 364.
Phoenician Ivories

Ivory was one of Phoenicia's most important international industries. In another example of the Phoenicians' artistic skillfulness, found later in the Book of Kings, we hear of Ahab—soon to be Jezebel's husband—requiring help from Phoenicia for the construction and adornment of his ivory palace (Amos 3:15; 1 Kings 22:39; Psalm 45:8). The Phoenician workshops became famous for the production of sumptuous articles, which have since been excavated primarily outside Phoenicia, in royal or princely tombs and many palaces in the ancient Near East. There is evidence for beds inlaid with ivory (Amos 6:4), ivory thrones (1 Kings 10:18; 2 Chronicles: 9:17), ivory plaques, chariots, Phoenician royal purple robes, ceramics and metalwork. Phoenician ivory artefacts appear throughout the entire ancient Near East as an elite commodity—one in high demand.

The two main manufacturers of ivory items were the Phoenicians and the North Syrians. Art history scholars and archaeologists distinguish the North Syrian from the Phoenician style by the general lack of Egyptian influence on elements and motifs in the former; for example, hairstyles, trees and floral elements, female sphinxes, musicians in procession towards a seated figure. The North Syrian designs were influenced by Hittite and Hurrian art, yet also reflected Mycenaean traditions of the late second millennium—evidence that there were cultural connections and

252 Aubet and Turton 2001, 79.
253 Sherratt 1993, 366.
254 For further reference and in-depth analysis on luxury arts and an 'international style' see Feldman 2001, 2006.
255 Phoenician ivory carver's got their raw material from the elephants of North Africa and Asia, whilst Indian ivory found its way to Sumer artisans by the third millennium BCE. For further information see Naylor 2011, 343–365.
256 Winter 1976A, p. 2. For additional information on the ivories, see Winter (1976B); Feldman (2002, 2006); Crowfoot (1935, 1938).
257 Barnett, 1935, pp. 191–2. Very briefly, Hittite and Hurrian art portrayed most often ritual activity, their gods with long beards, pointed shoes and hats and their goddesses with long, flowing, pleated gowns. Sun disks, sphinxes, lions and bulls were often depicted on registers, seals and tablets.
relationships not only within the ancient Near East but, in particular, around the Mediterranean. Many elements of the Phoenician designs such as the sun-disk (which had a wing protruding from each side) had Egyptian mythological roots and the wigs depicted on these plaques were generally linked to the hairstyle of Egyptian Goddess, Hathor.\textsuperscript{258}

Cross-cultural connections which occurred as a result of the export of these ivories meant that the symbology of the tree was also diffused. The role of the 'sacred tree' in the tradition of the ancient Near East is well established.\textsuperscript{259} Neo-Assyrian texts from our period (934–609 BCE)\textsuperscript{260} refer to the close association between the fertility of the land and care for the 'sacred tree', and this relationship is also depicted on the cylinder seals of the Marcopolic collection (established at the end of the nineteenth century CE), excavated from Syria, Mitanni, North and South Mesopotamia, and Assyria.\textsuperscript{261}

\textbf{Figure 12: Cylinder Seal Depicting the Sacred Tree and the Gods (from the Met Museum 2014).}

\textsuperscript{258} Markoe, 2000, 144; Winter 1976B, 47.
\textsuperscript{259} For further information on the Sacred Tree and King see Widengren 1951; see also Crowley 1989; Giovino 2007; Porter 2003.
\textsuperscript{260} Parpola 2006, 5; see also Giovino 2007; Porter 2003.
\textsuperscript{261} Teissier 1984, 38–39, 41, 43.
Furthermore, there are ivory plaques that contain only a single tree, which scholars claim is a palm, the provider of important staples of life (dates) in arid climates. These palm images have been discovered all over the ancient Near East; notably, in Mesopotamia the palm tree was a symbol of the Sumerian Inanna. The ivories depicted below (dated to approximately the ninth to eighth century BCE) were excavated by Crowfoot's team in the 1930s in Samaria, Ahab's capital. It can be seen that the elements in these ivories reflect the artistic style and imagery of the Phoenicians.

Figure 13: Phoenician Ivory Sphinx in the Egyptian Style (from the British museum 2014).
Figure 14: Phoenician Ivory Depicting Sacred Tree (Egyptian Style) (from Source memory 2011).
Figure 15: Phoenician Ivory Sphinx (2) in the Egyptian Style (from the Israel museum 2014).
Figure 16: Man with Tree of Life and Winged Sun Disk Motif (from the Met Museum 2014).

263 For further information see Crowfoot et al. 1942; see also Winter 1976A; Winter 1976B.
The Political Marriage of Jezebel

A diplomatic marriage to Jezebel meant advantageous connections and access to Mediterranean sources of precious metals such as gold and silver (if we are to believe this story as historical fact) for the procurement of which Solomon and Hiram maintained a joint fleet; they even made expeditions down to the Red Sea for the gold of Ophir) and new metalworking techniques (1 Kings 9, Chronicles 8).264 Once every three years, the navy of Tarshish would bring the navy of Hiram gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks — which gives an idea of the power and prestige of the Phoenicians during the tenth century.265

It bears reminding that Jezebel did not have a say in the matter of marriage, as her father and Ahab completed the transaction.266 With his marriage to Jezebel, Ahab inherited connections with foreign lands and commodities such as cedar and ivory, as well as craftsmen to be at his disposal. In other words, for him this was a very beneficial marriage. What Jezebel herself thought of the marriage we will never know, but royal women were typically groomed for international diplomatic unions. It must also be recalled that the Bible stated that Ahab fathered 70 sons, all living in Samaria (2 Kings 10:1), which meant that if we do take this as being historically accurate, that he must have been involved sexually with several women and either had other wives besides Jezebel or several concubines. A royal woman was trafficked between lands and, much like Greek and Roman women would be in the future, was told to "abandon the paternal fire, and henceforth invoke only that of her husband...She must give up the god of her infancy, and put herself under the

265 Moscati 1965, 14.
266 In offering his daughter, Ethoba'al sought to secure continued trade concessions with the flourishing Israelite kingdom and its newly established capital at Samara, see Markoe 2000, 38.
protection of a god whom she knows not. Let her not hope to remain faithful to the one while honouring the other; for in this religion it is an immutable principle that the same person cannot invoke two sacred fires or two series of ancestors.”267 Psalm 45:10 also demands that a woman should "forget your people and your father's house." Evidence can also be seen within the Bible in characters such as Ruth the Moabite, who renounces her religion and submerges herself in the Israelite ways (Ruth 1–4).268 This was the ideal, but realistically, international marriage introduced foreign practices to the new homeland in fields such as cult, arts and routines.

Israelite Ethnicity

It is important here to outline briefly the juxtaposition between the religious attitudes of Phoenicia and Israel, and the magnitude of importance of cult in the everyday life of citizens, and more importantly, the royal household. It must be noted that although monotheism (Yahweh) was the state religion of Israel, other forms of religion, primarily paganism, encompassing household cults (as will be addressed later in this and subsequent chapters), persisted and were perceived in the eyes of the biblical authors as a hazard that threatened the very foundations of Yahwism. It has long been a moot point on the subject of the Bible whether it was unique in form or had been assimilated from an earlier Mesopotamian culture.269 Israelite immigration according to the Bible began with Abraham and his family (Genesis 12:1–9).270

Biblical evidence places the date of the Israelites entering Canaan at approximately the time of the eighteenth and nineteenth Egyptian Dynasty, with the biblical Joshua

267 This quote is from de Coulanges 1980, 35, and also found in Pomeroy 1995, 115.
268 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 2. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
269 Richard 2003, 51.
270 For a thorough analysis of Abraham (both in history and tradition) see Van Seters 1975.
leading them;\textsuperscript{271} however, there are no other literary sources that attest to this 'migration'. William Albright's model (1960s) conveyed the strong belief that the biblical migration of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan was factual; the successful military invasions led by the biblical Joshua and the immense destruction they caused were how the Israelites claimed their 'promised' land (Joshua 1–12). However, these texts were written late in Israel's history, typically dated to the post-exilic period (sixth century BCE), and included Judges. They are all theologically motivated, and must be utilised with extreme caution, as archaeological excavations have caused them to become mostly obsolete as historical evidence.\textsuperscript{272}

In the last five decades we have seen hypotheses such as George Mendenhall's 'Peasant Revolt' (1962), in which he argued that the so-called conquest of Canaan was actually a revolt by peasants against the network of interlocking Canaanite city states.\textsuperscript{273} This revolt, he suggested, was triggered by a small group of slaves who had fled Egypt, bringing with them the worship of a deity named Yahweh. This group then were able to win over the peasant population of Canaan and as a united force they drove out the kings and their supporters.\textsuperscript{274}

Albrecht Alt's 'Migration Model' (1968), posited that Israel emerged in the land of Canaan through peaceful infiltration of pastoral nomadic groups over a long period of time and it was a multifaceted process.\textsuperscript{275} During the 1980s, Israel Finkelstein wrote a milestone book, \textit{The Archaeology of the Israelite Settlement}, and concluded that

\textsuperscript{271} Paton 1914, 207; see also Woudstra 1981.
\textsuperscript{272} Laughlin 2000, 111.
\textsuperscript{273} Callaway 1995, 91.
\textsuperscript{274} Laughlin 2000, 112–13.
\textsuperscript{275} Finkelstein 1988, 295–314.
throughout the late fourth millennium to the end of the second, pastoral groups had become sedentarised in the highlands. Thus, the people who settled there (including the Transjordan) during Iron Age I were involved in a process which...was part of a cyclic mechanism of alternating processes of sedentarisation and nomadisation of indigenous groups in response to changing political, economic, and social circumstances.276 In conclusion, these people were "mostly not invaders, political refugees, revolutionaries, 'social bandits' or the like, but simply immigrants from elsewhere in Canaan, most of them apparently experienced farmers and stockbreeders.277

William Dever expanded on Finkelstein's hypothesis by stating that most of the Iron I Central Hill Settlement came from the already sedentary Canaanite population and he labelled these people 'Proto-Israelites', the ancestors of later Israelites.278 Finkelstein determined that with the aid of archaeology, it can be seen that the emergence of Israel was not a unique, meta-historical episode, but more so a larger, broader, historical process that took place in the ancient Near East.279 This process brought about the destruction of an ancient regime and led to the rise of a new order of national or territorial states.280 Finkelstein surmises that the combination of the events of the conquest of Canaan aided by new archaeology, is so entirely detached from the traditional biblical reality, that it is pivotal for a broad scope of analyses to take place before and conclusion can be drawn about the early history of Israel.281 Dever and Finkelstein (with Siberman) also provide the most recent reports on the archaeology of highland Israelite Iron Age I sites associated with the emergence of ancient Israel.282

276 Finkelstein 1996, 208; see also Laughlin 2000, 116.
278 Laughlin 2000, 117.
The Bible and Jezebel

Historian Morton Smith once stated that "in a monotheistic environment, monolatry is perfectly sensible; you worship one god because it is the only one. In contrast, restricting worship to one god when others are acknowledged to exist is difficult to uphold."[^283] The Book of Kings is part of the Deuteronomistic History[^284], which takes as its definitive theological theme "military punishment for religious faithlessness."[^285] The history involves two major editions, one compiled in seventh-century BCE Judah, and the other during the sixth-century BCE exile, both having subsequent minor editions.[^286] The Deuteronomistic History[^287] is attributed either to a single author, or to a school or movement of authors and editors collectively known as the Deuteronomists.[^288] Jezebel provides a perfect opportunity for the Deuteronomists to teach a moral lesson to the Israelites about the evil outcomes of idolatry, making it somewhat difficult to navigate a middle road.[^289] Although for centuries Yahwism had struggled with the suppression of goddess worship,[^290] the prophet stories of the two Books of Kings bear eloquent testimony to a time of extreme crisis in Israel: Ahab, his sons and especially his Phoenician wife were promoting Baalism and the religion of Israel was facing a great threat.[^291] There are two stories pertaining to Jezebel's 'evil' deeds within the Book of Kings—the Contest on Mount Carmel and the Naboth episode, both seen as "deliberate polemics against Canaanite mythology."[^292] The Elijah-Elisha cycle, in which Jezebel appears, demonstrates the capacity of literary

[^283]: Smith 2002, 441.
[^284]: This movement culminated in the great reform of Josiah in 621 BCE: "It was a radical and uncompromising expression of absolute monotheism and cultic centralisation: one God, one shrine. It demanded total devotion—in love—to god and rejection of all foreign gods and ideas." See Geller 2002, 102.
[^287]: This spans seven books: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel 1, Samuel 2, 1 Kings, 2 Kings.
[^288]: Gaines 2013, 1 June, 2 [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
[^289]: Gaines 2013, 1 June, 2 [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
[^290]: Be it Asherah, Ishtar or the Queen of Heaven; see Lacocque 1990, 11.
[^291]: De Vries 2003, 209.
[^292]: Moore 1990, 117.
creativity and genius. Elijah, the chief prophet of God, publicly and feverishly protests against proclivity towards the cult of Baal, the Canaanite fertility cult and the amoral nature of worship in Canaan. Elijah was the hero of Israel who turned the Israelites' hearts back to their one God, Yahweh. The authors of Kings targeted Jezebel for the gross abandonment of the monotheistic religion for several reasons, but mainly for their own ends, to demonstrate the consequences of her failure to maintain the Israelite ideal of a well-respected, humble, law-abiding, God-fearing woman and Queen. Jezebel's death was the most vividly described murder in the entire Bible—no other comes close. This woman's death is a grotesque and frightening example to all (especially women) flirting with the concept of venerating foreign deities and turning away from their one true God, and additionally, in the case of women, disregarding their submissive roles and transgressing the sphere to which God appointed them (Genesis 3:16).

The cautionary tale of Jezebel begins in the Bible in 1 Kings 16:31: "[Ahab] took as wife Jezebel, daughter of Ethba'al, king of Tyre; and he went and served Baal and worshipped him." Jezebel's crime is succinctly stated in the first passage in which she appears—apostasy, which she also imposes upon her husband, the king and consequently his people, the Israelites. It must be noted here that although Jezebel brought her own Tyrian Baal to Israel, the worship of Baal in general already existed in Israel and was an existing threat to the authors of the Bible. Ahab had a similar policy to Solomon's: the royal house respected deities of all subjects, especially those

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293 For further information and analysis on this cycle see Bronner 1968.
295 Within this passage, Eve is put into a state of subjection: the whole sex, which at creation was equal with man, is for sin made inferior. See Wesley's Bible notes at http://bible.cc/genesis/3-16.htm.
296 Ethba'al a priest of the Phoenician goddess Astarte usurped the throne of Tyre from the tyrant Phelles and began a most powerful Phoenician Dynasty; see Phipps 1992, 69.
297 For a thorough analysis of the numerous Baal names in Samaria, see Tigay 1987.
of the royal family, therefore Ahab encouraged—and also participated in—Jezebel's worship of Phoenician deities.\(^{298}\) It is also interesting to note that Ahab (the Israelite king) was never held responsible for his actions, but was considered simply to have been led astray by a foreign woman. Thus, in regards to Jezebel's position in Israelite society, she can be précised in two words—'foreign female'.

The Bible states overtly that Jezebel was a Phoenician, and her wicked religion was attested to in several chapters—especially regarding the immoral act of child sacrifice by flame (Judges 10:6; 2 Kings 16:13; Isaiah 57:5; Ezekiel 16:21) and burial in urns.\(^{299}\) The Deuteronomistic Historians blamed Jezebel, a convenient scapegoat, for the apostasy of the Israelites. Due to her marriage to Ahab, she was able to advocate a form of paganism that threatened Israelite monotheistic religion. Jezebel's Phoenician religion must have been a sizeable threat if the followers of Yahweh blamed her for their people turning to polytheistic religions.

It is important to note here that there is an abundance of archaeological and historical evidence regarding household cult and magic already existing within the homes of Israel.\(^{300}\) This matter will be discussed in the next chapter, since here we are primarily concerned with the textual evidence for Jezebel.

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\(^{298}\) Hermann 1975, 209; see also Bronner 1968, 1–17.

\(^{299}\) Although the Bible does not in name mention Phoenicia, some scholars suggest that it was directed at them all but in name. For further information see Camp 1998, pp. 102–116; see also Smith 2002, 172. It is important to add here that child sacrifice and tophets are incredibly controversial subjects and they go well and truly beyond the scope of this thesis, but for further information and discussion, see Noort (2007, 103, 126) and Day (1989).

\(^{300}\) See Meyers (2005) for further information on household gods and goddesses in Israel.
The Biblical Evidence: Mount Carmel

The political marriage of Ahab to Jezebel not only led to him worshipping Baal, but also saw him constructing a shrine and altar in Samaria; furthermore, he created a wooden image (idol), provoking God's wrath (1 Kings 16:32–33). Fearing that Ahab's people would follow suit, God sent his prophet Elijah to remedy the situation and turn Israel's heart once again towards Yahweh. Jezebel's first so-called wicked deed unfavourable to Israel—not including her acts of Baal worship and essential 'foreignness'—was the massacre of Yahweh's prophets, which came in retaliation for the slaughter of her holy priests by Elijah. The account begins with God sending a drought upon Samaria, causing a great famine (1 Kings 18:3). It is not stated why God sent the drought and famine; perhaps it was to punish Ahab and Jezebel, and thus the people of Israel, for committing idolatry, or as was intended as retribution against Queen Jezebel who had busied herself 'killing off the Lord's prophets' (1 Kings 18:4).

The apostasy and idolatry angered the prophet Elijah and a challenge was set between Yahweh and the pagan Baal and Asherah cults.101 Whoever's deity could burn the sacrificial bull but not the wood it was placed upon was to be acknowledged as the one true God (1 Kings 18:20–26). The theme of a religious face-off is remarkably similar to that seen in Moses' challenge to the Egyptian magicians in Exodus (7:8–13; 8:22; 20:22). Elijah threw down the gauntlet to Jezebel calling for Ahab to "summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat

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101 Asherah and Astarte are the later evolved versions of Athirat, an Ugaritic Goddess dating before 1200 BCE. The term asherah as Gaines (2013, 8–9) explains, appears at least 50 times within the Hebrew Bible (often translated as "sacred post or pillar"). It is used to refer to three manifestations of this goddess: an image (probably a figurine) of the goddess (e.g., 2 Kings 21:7); a tree (Deuteronomy 16:21); and a tree trunk, or sacred post (Deuteronomy 7:5, 12:3). For a good covering and reassessment of Asherah, see Wiggins (1993); see also Hestrin 1991, 50–59. Additionally, Raphael Patai (1990) and William Dever (2005) have written landmark books based on ancient texts and archaeology on the subject of the goddess Asherah, who at one time was considered the consort of Yahweh, only to die out with the beginning of the monotheistic religion of Yahweh.
at *Jezebel's* table" (1 Kings 18:19; emphasis added). The wording of this challenge is pivotal in determining Jezebel's position within Israelite society. Elijah mentions that Jezebel (not Ahab) has her *own* table of prophets; thus, some scholars deduce that she would have had control of her own wealth—Phoenicia being a very wealthy country—as the feeding and maintaining of 900 prophets would be costly. It would also imply that it was initially Jezebel committing the sin of apostasy and that Ahab was a gullible follower, linked by marriage. Therefore, it could be stated that Jezebel herself held considerable power within the royal courts and was a force to be reckoned with.

Elijah stated that, due to her assassination of the priests, "[he is] the only one of the Lord's prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets" (1 Kings 18:22). The statement itself is a fabrication as there were 100 of God's prophets hidden from Jezebel in caves, a fact of which Elijah was well aware (1 Kings 18:13). The dissemblance could be interpreted in three ways: firstly, that due to Jezebel's murders, Elijah wished to keep secret the fact these men of God were alive; secondly, that he was evoking pity and attempting to sway the people of Israel, who would then observe the single prophet miraculously defeating a contingent of Baal and Asherah prophets; or thirdly, that he wanted to demonstrate that the power of Yahweh was so mighty that a large number of priests and prophets was not required in order to prevail. The number of prophets on the other side was in all likelihood embellished to make this story appear more spectacular.

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302 Ackerman 1993, 392; see also Davies 2003, 73.
The site of Mount Carmel was a particularly significant choice of battleground for this contest between Gods, as it was part of the border territory disputed by the Phoenicians and Israelites. The contest on Mount Carmel initially manifests as 'good' (in the person of Elijah, an adversary of the house of Omri) triumphing over 'evil' (Jezebel and her whoredom). However, in the background lurked the more profound political complication for Israel during this period; namely, the significance of the rapid advance of Baalism under the rule of Ahab and his wife. Israel, in the view of the Deuteronomistic Historians, was in severe trouble from a foreign religious invasion, and subsequently, the takeover of Yahwistic religions. Thus, the Mount Carmel episode can be understood as an attempt by passionate Yahwists to rid the Carmel area of its local shrines/open air sanctuaries, as many of the holy sites of the polytheistic religions were on hills, especially those dedicated to deities associated with weather and natural phenomena.

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304 Hermann 1975, 211.
305 Gaines 1999, 45; see also Harden 1971, 94.
The link between gods and mountains was by no means an original concept of the Israelites. The Greek Zeus, with his fiery lightning and thunderbolts, was thought to reside on the top of Mount Olympus; the Phoenician Baal, also with the lightning symbol, dwelt upon Mount Saphon; the storm god of the Hittites, Teshshub, who had lightning bolts in one hand, straddled two mountains; and Indra, favourite god of the Vedic Indians, with his lightning bolt vajra, was acknowledged as lord of the mountains.306 Furthermore, the Minoans and many Mediterranean cultures also honoured their gods at peak sanctuaries; archaeologists have an impressive quantity of evidence authenticating this.307

The Baal devotees in the challenge on Mount Carmel, exemplified the use of acts of imitative magic,308 which is sought to create an illusion of life-giving rain by the release of their own life essence, their blood.309 The Baalists, like many pagan or polytheistic religions, believed that blood was the life essence, and the bloodletting done by their prophets was a rite of imitative magic designed to prompt a liberal release of vital rain and so support the life dependant on it.310 The Yahwists in Israel sought to contain and eradicate this 'magic'.

As the challenge progressed, the prophets of Baal were unable to gain their god's attention and therefore could not complete the task set for them by Elijah (1 Kings 18:26–28). Elijah with a simple prayer to Yahweh, "O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back

307 For further information see Kyriakidis 2005 and Jones 1999.
308 Imitative magic is an attempt to control the universe by mimicking a desired event. In the case of the contest on Mount Carmel, the Baalists, in an attempt to make it rain on the offering, used imitative magic and cut themselves with swords, making them bleed/"rain" (1 Kings 18:28).
309 Gray 1970, 393.
again" (1 Kings 18:37), called upon the fire and successfully completed the task. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!" (1 Kings 18:39).

Elijah, after thus providing proof of the existence of his God, ordered his people to arrest the priests of Baal and slaughter them (1 Kings 18:40). What is fascinating is that there is not one comment whatsoever about the fate of the prophets of Asherah, but it appears they were not slaughtered. This could lead to the assumption that the worship of Asherah was a threat, but not on the same scale as Baalism.³¹¹ It is worth noting here that the contest on Mount Carmel involved religious men who represented Jezebel's personal faith, yet Jezebel herself was absent. Ahab was the one to tell her of their massacre (1 Kings 19:1), in response to which we hear the first utterances of the powerful queen, directed at Elijah: "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them" (1 Kings 19:2). In addition to this threat, within the Septuagint she passionately adds, "If you are Elijah, then I am Jezebel."³¹²

The Naboth Episode

The Naboth episode within the Bible illustrates the clever, conniving and manipulative characteristics the authors ascribe to Jezebel. Furthermore, if we assess Jezebel's actions through the later covenant laws, we see her outwardly violating several of its edicts, as the scenario is based on a patrimonial land tenure system, by

³¹¹ Dever's book Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel (2005), states that God did indeed have a wife/consort (prior to 600 BCE) and her name was Asherah. Due to Yahwism taking hold, Dever continues, her religion went underground and God became a solitary ruler.
³¹² See Septuagint (1 Kings 19:2b).
which the Israelite kings were also bound.\textsuperscript{313} It commences with Ahab wanting to purchase or exchange something for Naboth's vineyard, but he is rejected on the grounds that it was the inheritance of Naboth's fathers and, as Numbers 36:7 states, "No inheritance in Israel is to pass from tribe to tribe, for every Israelite shall keep the tribal land inherited from his forefathers." The rationale behind Naboth's answer comes from Leviticus 25:23: "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants." Bernhard Anderson further clarifies Naboth's refusal by explaining that: "Yahweh Himself was the owner of the land. Faithful to his promise, he had brought the Israelites into a cultured country and had given the land to various tribes and clans. They were to act as stewards of Yahweh's property, administering it for the welfare of the whole community."\textsuperscript{314} Thus rejected, Ahab returns home sullen and refusing to eat, sulking on his bed. He informs his wife, Jezebel, of Naboth's negative response, prompting her to ask, "Do you now govern Israel? Arise and eat bread and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite" (1 Kings 21:7).

Jezebel's Phoenician bloodline boasted many omnipotent kings who held virtually unlimited authority to do as they pleased, when they pleased, unlike Ahab, whose power was circumscribed by his people's religion. Although both theocratic in rule, in Phoenicia, "temple and palace retained an almost absolute power in this sense, especially if we bear in mind that the function of the chief priest was in the hands of the king himself or of members of the royal family."\textsuperscript{315} As a result, Jezebel the Phoenician princess was accustomed to royal prerogative and unused to the rule within Israelite culture that regarded land as a gift given to each Israelite family by

\textsuperscript{313} Coogan 1998, 223.
\textsuperscript{314} Anderson 1967, 219.
\textsuperscript{315} Aubet 1993, 147.
their God, Yahweh, rather than at the behest of the king. Therefore, Jezebel perceived the refusal of Naboth to sell his vineyard as insubordination towards the king. It must be remembered that Jezebel, royally educated from birth to govern, daughter of the king of Tyre, priestess of the cult of Baal, wife of the king of the Northern Kingdom, was accustomed to taking political matters in hand, making decisions and achieving goals; in which the latter two could possibly be seen as similar to the 'ideal woman' presented within the Bible (Proverbs 12:4; Proverbs 18:22; Proverbs 31), but, not in regards to being submissive.

Jezebel formulated a plan and firstly "wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and the leaders who lived with Naboth in his city" (1 Kings 21:8). However, clever Jezebel is careful not to overstep the boundaries of established royal prerogative within Israelite society. She seems to know her place, first as a woman, second as a queen, and observes the appropriate royal conventions. She writes, but she does so in the name of Ahab. In these letters, Jezebel proclaims a feast day, during which she plans to have two 'scoundrels' testify that Naboth, while at the feast day table, cursed both God and king—a formidable charge which will cost Naboth his life (1 Kings 21:12). Subsequently, Naboth is found guilty and taken outside the city and stoned (1 Kings 21:13).

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316 Schottroff 1998, 110.
318 According to first century CE historian Josephus, which drew on a Greek translation of the now-lost Annals of Tyre the king of Tyre was himself a priest of Asherah/Astarte. If we are to take this in to account The Phoenicians, like many peoples in the ancient Near East (for example, the Egyptians, Mesopotamians and the Hittites), had a penchant for mixing the roles of government, business and religion. Since the king of Byblos was also the high priest, he continued to rule this religious city in his secular role, and also managed the trade passing through his city. See Holst 2005, 135.
319 Brenner, (1985, 23–4), Williams (2008, 14) Kroeger and Evans (2002, 197), Stone 1978, 177) and Leong (2011, 175) all reason in light of Josephus's writings that Jezebel must have been a high priestess, since her father, Ethoba'al, functioned as the high priest of Astarte/Asherah. If this is indeed correct, Ethoba'al would have trained his daughter to perform corresponding ceremonies in a temple of Baal. See Williams 2008, 14.
The story of Jezebel and her underhanded plot to murder Naboth, unintentionally (on the part of the Deuteronomistic Historians) generates the theory that Jezebel, as a queen, held significant authority over her people. The Bible records that "the elders and the nobles who lived in [Naboth's] town...did as Jezebel had instructed them" (1 Kings 21:11). If this story is true, it appears that Jezebel wielded a great deal of power over Northern Israel, as she was able to enlist the support of many significant townspeople, none of whom betrayed her or her plan. Thus they aided her in orchestrating the murder of a man whom they had probably known for their entire lives and who was completely innocent. Perhaps Jezebel, if she existed and if we read between the lines, had more power than the pages of the Bible indicate.

Most would perceive the treatment of Naboth as a malicious act by Jezebel, yet Tikva Frymer-Kensky states that "[the] picture of the supporting wife is consistent, so that even the villainess Queen Jezebel acts as a model wife when she steps in to help her husband realise his desire for Naboth's vineyard, defying Israelite limitations on her royal power." As soon as Jezebel hears that Naboth was stoned and is dead, she commands Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezeelote, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead" (1 Kings 21:15). Of the Ten Commandments Jezebel has grossly violated four: coveting a neighbour's field (Law 10), bearing false witness (Law 9), theft (Law 8), and finally murder (Law 6) (Deuteronomy 5:6–21).

323 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 5 [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
324 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 5[http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
325 Frymer-Kensky 1992, 123.
The death of Naboth instigated the return from forced exile of Elijah, bearing God's message to Ahab: "Wasn't it enough that you killed Naboth? Must you rob him, too? Because you have done this, dogs will lick your blood at the very place where they licked the blood of Naboth!" (1 Kings 21:19). Elijah duly informs Ahab and Jezebel of God's intention to consume all of Ahab's male descendants, annihilating his bloodline, and to leave his wife, Jezebel to the dogs. When Ahab heard this ominous prophecy, he tore his clothing, dressed in sackcloth and fasted. He even slept in sackcloth and went about in deep mourning (1 Kings 21:27). His actions reflect traditional mourning practices, widely observed throughout the ancient Near East, encompassing Babylonia, Israel, Phoenicia and Egypt.\(^{326}\) It is interesting to observe here that Jezebel would have been more than acquainted with these customs, but she did not join her husband in mourning and humbling himself before God—perhaps because she had no guilt or remorse for her actions; within the Bible she does not utter even a word. Maybe Jezebel thought Elijah was incapable of delivering on his threats to the royal family. Nevertheless, Ahab's guilt was blamed on his foreign wife as "there was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife" (1 Kings 21:25). This biblical passage correlates with the Deuteronomistic redactors' opinion that Ahab was completely beguiled by his wife, Jezebel, due to her power and his inept weakness in yielding to her desires. Ahab exemplified great remorse for his transgressions against Naboth, Jezebel none, yet God deferred his retribution to the time of Ahab's sons (not Jezebel's!) (1 Kings 21:29).

\(^{326}\) Stone 1978, 143. Mourning customs will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Five.
The Beginning of the End for the Omri Dynasty

In the interim, Ahab was off waging war, campaigning with Judah against Aram, and there is no further mention of Jezebel until the death of Ahab, after which Jezebel rose to the position of *Gebira* or Queen Mother. This post will be examined in more depth in the following chapter, as it has many facets and can be identified all around the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean. With the death of the prophet Elijah, Elisha is anointed as his successor, and he in turn appoints Jehu as king and replacement for Ahab's dynasty, which he is to destroy (2 Kings 9).

At the time of Jehu's revolution, there was, as mentioned earlier, grave concern within the Israelite religious sphere about the threat of Baal worship, and this ultimately led to the eradication of Ahab, his wife and son's and the consequent elimination of Baalism. Before the deaths of Jezebel's sons, Jehu approached one of them, Joram, who asked if Jehu was there for peace. Jehu retorted, "What peace,

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327 Jehu (anointed king by the prophet Elisha), was the usurper and murderer of both Jezebel's son's Joram and Ahaziah (killed by Jehu's army). See 2 Kings 9:10–11.
328 Campbell 1986, 109–19.
while the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her many sorceries continue?" (2 Kings 9:22). This comment written by the Deuteronomistic Historians contains a new accusation against Jezebel: that she was a supernatural practitioner of spells, being aided by evil spirits. Thus the Deuteronomists reference another threat they were facing: the occult. Women were recognised as practitioners of occult arts (as 'mediums' and 'sorcerers'), although in Israel such practices were prohibited (1 Samuel 28:7; Deuteronomy 18:10; 2 Chronicles 33:6). In the next chapter, substantial evidence will be presented to show that this prohibition was quite often ignored.329

Additionally, when Jehu makes his comments about Jezebel's 'whoredoms' and 'sorceries' (2 Kings 9:22), Jezebel's first 'crime' against Yahweh returns to mind. She and Ahab were guilty of building an Asherah, an upright wooden object symbolising the goddess Asherah (1 Kings 16:33) and worshipped it. The same religious aspects (in regards to the worship of Asherah) which Jezebel and Ahab took part of was also mentioned with prejudice in another biblical passage about pagan 'whoredoms'. In Hosea 4:12–13, the prophet claims:

> My people consult a piece of wood, and their divining rod gives them oracles, for a spirit of whoredom has led them astray, and they have played the whore, forsaking their god. They sacrifice on the tops of mountains, and make offerings upon the hills, under oak, poplar, and terebinth, because their shade is good. Therefore your daughters play the whore, and your daughters-in-law commit adultery.

The finale of Jezebel, her death, will be discussed at length in Chapter Five. Although Jezebel's life features in only two books of the Bible, her name resonates throughout history and when mentioned now still evokes a reaction (albeit mostly negative).

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330 This is in reference to the episode on Mount Carmel, discussed previously, with the issues regarding 'pagan' sacrifices on mountains.
Thus, "Jezebel is not single, but multiple; she is not restricted to one [era], but belongs to many eras."331

**The Seed of Evil—Resewn**

An interesting additional note on the house of Omri is that Athaliah, who, it has been argued, was either Jezebel's daughter, granddaughter or sister-in-law, also maintained the notion of Phoenician royal prerogative.332 Athaliah was married to Jehoram, who was king of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. She was a devoted follower of Baal and encouraged her religion in her position as Queen Mother. On her son's death she coveted his throne and devised a plan in which she "destroyed all the seed royal," bar one, who was in hiding (unbeknownst to Athaliah) and was saved by his aunt (2 Kings 1:11–12). Athaliah crowned herself and maintained her 'illegitimate' queenship for six years. She is the only woman in the Bible to have ruled in her own right. Just like Jezebel, Athaliah was an incredibly powerful woman, yet both she and her mother met their demise by execution during coups by religious fanatics (2 Kings 11:20).

![Figure 19: Painting of Child Murderer Athaliah (by Dufour c. 1505)](image)

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331 Ziolkowski 1989, 16.
332 Bellis 1994, 168; see also, Baramki 1961, 27.
Athaliah's fall from grace was blamed on her idolatry. But could perhaps it also be due to the audacity of taking a male position in a male-dominated society?333 Because of her partial Phoenician upbringing, her role as Queen Mother (if she were in Phoenicia) would have been as a cult figurehead of the State. Due to her disregard of Yahweh, the 'appropriate' Israelite deity, she was often chastised and portrayed, similarly to Jezebel, as an idolatrous whore by the Deuteronomistic Historians for heaping disgrace upon her already tainted family tree and for somewhat embarrassing Israel. Athalya Brenner succinctly states, "She was clever and tough...her behaviour implied that, until her downfall, she enjoyed a power base whose components were her royal origins; her previous role as king's wife, king's mother, intimate adviser to her son Ahaziah and regnant after his death; her control of the religious establishment; and like Jezebel, her personal capabilities and education."334

333 Other scholars in agreement to this include Newsom, Ringe and Lapsley (2012, 189) "She performs a masculine role...the [speaking] woman goes on to "be king". Furthermore, She does not perform the maternal role as expected." Marsman (2003, 368), additionally adds fuel to this idea stating that "Although some of the later Judahite kings were just as faithless in regard to Yahwism as Athaliah, their rule was considered legitimate, for they were males and descendents of the Davidic line, whereas Athaliah was a female and a foreigner.....A queen ruling in her own right apparently was unacceptable."
Chapter Four:

Jezebel's Phoenician Power and Prestige Versus Fear and Loathing in Israel

Jezebel's Life Changes

The evidence indicates that Jezebel was viewed unfavourably in the works of the biblical writers primarily for three reasons: firstly, because of her tight affiliation to an external pagan religion and her subsequent faithful endorsement of it in her capacity as Israeliite queen and, even more so, queen mother; secondly, because of her status as an outsider who violated several codes of Israeliite law; and finally, because she was a woman appropriating power which was by right her husband's. All these factors eventually contributed to her gruesome downfall.

Now that the biblical framework of Jezebel's story has been examined in the previous chapters, it is opportune to analyse the historical and archaeological evidence of her lifetime. Simultaneously, it is pivotal that the fear of the non-Israelite is also addressed, since in Jezebel's lifetime outside forces were considered a major threat to Yahwism. Jezebel in her Phoenician homeland held a hereditary position of power through birthright, a situation common to many royal families around the ancient Near East. Additionally, her education would have covered being well versed in state and international politics and she would have been literate. Jezebel was part of a ruling family that had ultimate control of both religion and state in Phoenicia, the two spheres being often amalgamated in her homeland and other countries of the ancient Near East (for example, Egypt and Mesopotamia).

335 As mentioned in Chapter One, the only evidence we have of Jezebel's existence is a seal which itself is debatable in authenticity. There are also the sites of Jezreel and Samaria, but they cannot validate her existence, thus, we have to rely heavily upon the textual references within the Bible.
When Jezebel was strategically wed to Ahab of Israel by her father, she was thrust out of a world of colour and prestige—where people openly celebrated and venerated their gods—into a somewhat self-effacing, xenophobic, god-fearing and alien place. Compared to the hustle and bustle of Tyre, a port full of merchants and traders, Israel must have appeared more sedate. Although there are no solid population numbers for either Tyre or Samaria, Figures 19 and 20 illustrate from excavations the rough size of both cities. In Ezekiel 26–28, the prophet criticises the Phoenicians for being boisterous in song and celebration, possessing wealth and fine houses, and having royalty which adorned itself in colourfully embroidered garments and called itself 'gods'. On the basis of these statements, it could be assumed that Phoenicia was everything that was most abhorred by Israel. Furthermore, it could help explain why Jezebel was so loathed by the Deuteronomistic Historians. The vanity of the people and their 'personal' connection to a multitude of foreign gods was to be their eventual downfall, in Ezekiel's prophetic opinion.

The negative manner in which Ezekiel described the Phoenicians clearly demonstrates that Israelites believed their neighbours lived in a state of excess which had led them towards a life of 'sin'. They apparently venerated their gods' images, adorned themselves to excess, and wore luxurious, opulent clothing, indulged in child sacrifice by fire (1 Kings 13:2; Jeremiah 32:35), and were blatantly involved in sexual promiscuity and fornication (Isaiah 23:17, which could be perceived as a reflection of the episode of Sodom and Gomorrah; Genesis 18–19). Conversely, Israel in every respect believed in the First and Second Commandments which stated:

You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the
earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments (Exodus 20: 3–6).

The clash between polytheism and monotheism was the politico-religious framework that Jezebel entered when she married Ahab. It bears recalling that at this stage (ninth century BCE) the religion of Yahweh was centred more on the elite males than the citizens, many of whom believed in pagan gods in addition to Yahweh. To Jezebel, Israeliite monotheism must have been a source of distress, as what was acceptable and deemed a way of life in Phoenicia was in Israel banned and frowned upon by the elite. It would have been entirely new territory for Jezebel. For the sake of diplomacy she acquiesced, yet she also continued to do what she was raised to do—be an intermediary for her father and her gods in Israel. Jezebel's personal salvation—but her downfall in the opinion of the biblical writers—was that she brought with her to Israel the cult of the Tyrian Baal, which included her priests and priestesses (1 Kings 16:31).
Figure 20: Excavation Map of Samaria (from Reisner 1924).
Figure 21: Map of Phoenicia and Their Commodities (from Gore 2004).
Early Pre-Israelite Religion

The previous chapter briefly touched upon Israelite ethnicity, in connection with the origins of the Israelites in the Bible. Abraham (if there was such a historical person), not Moses, was in the eyes of the biblical writers; the founder of monotheism,336 which is somewhat paradoxical, given that he originated from Mesopotamia,337 a land with an entire pantheon of gods. If the story is true, "Long ago your forefathers, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the River and worshipped other gods" (Joshua 24:2; Nehemiah 9:7). Early Mesopotamia, from which many of the biblical myths were 'borrowed',338 had a cosmology with forces that constantly affected residents' everyday lives. The citizens were convinced that accidents, illness, crop failure, storms, floods and earthquakes were products of the supernatural.339 Although the Sumerians—like most ancient Near Eastern cultures—were passionate about their gods, they never denied or denounced the existence of foreign deities.340 They were able to speak those foreign gods' names and often saw them as different versions of their own deities; in this they differed markedly from the Israelites, who constantly forbade worship of other gods, and relentlessly tried to eradicate them all in favour of Yahweh.341

In the view of the biblical writers, the entire lifestyle of the Mesopotamians, much like the Phoenicians, in terms of both individuals and the society as a whole, was regulated by the principles of polytheism and 'devil' worship, although the populace

336 Segal 1961, 41; for further information on this view, see Klinghoffer 2007.
337 Van Seters 1975, 243–45
338 Such as Utnapishtim and the 'Flood', see Dalley 2008, 1–38, 182–188.
339 Jones 1975, 72.
341 Jones 1975, 73.
also considered practitioners of magic, sorcerers, and diviners important.\textsuperscript{342} The biblical writers' had a hatred and perpetual fear of the outsider (particularly sorcerers). The objects of this fear and hatred came to include polytheists of any kind, unconventional women (whores, prostitutes, etc.), outsiders ( widows, transvestites etc.) and foreign women. The Israelites wanted social cohesion in their country and, more importantly, to maintain their \textit{Israelite} identity. This preoccupation can be observed early in the Bible when, upon entering Canaan, Abraham ordered his servant to fetch a wife from his relatives in Harran, rather than marrying a local woman (Genesis 24). Prohibitions against marriage to Canaanites filtered down to the book of Deuteronomy (Exodus 23:32; 34:11–16; Deuteronomy 7:1–4).\textsuperscript{343}

The Fear of the 'Other' and Intermarriage

The danger represented by the outsider/non-Israelite is a developing theme throughout the Bible, and it must have been considered a realistic threat for its authors to constantly reiterate, as can be seen in respect to Phoenicia. Aubet states that

\begin{quote}
the deep resentment of some of the Hebrew prophets [and biblical writers] and in particular, their anti-monarchist posture, is not due to the institution itself. What they cannot tolerate in relation to the monarchs of Tyre is that they have set themselves up as priests and cherubs; that is to say, as the sole intermediaries between man and the deity. As we know, it is precisely this function of intermediaries before Yahweh that the prophets of Israel claim for themself.\textsuperscript{344}
\end{quote}

The hazard of unregulated association with 'others' became apparent to those who advocated the exclusive worship of one god, which the biblical writers felt was threatened.\textsuperscript{345} As early as the Exodus, which if it did indeed occur, has been dated

\textsuperscript{342} Segal 1961, 44–5. Women also held positions in prophesying, sorcery and divination; see Nemet-Nejat 1999, 108.
\textsuperscript{343} Paton 1914, 206.
\textsuperscript{344} Aubet 1993, 125. For further analysis on mediation and communication between heaven and earth, see Couch, Stökl and Zernecke 2012.
\textsuperscript{345} Gardiner 1961, 352.
(debatably) the late thirteenth century BCE, the perception of intermarriage as a threat was conspicuous: "When you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same" (Exodus 34:16). Several Israelite kings earned Yahweh's disapproval over this matter. King Solomon's downfall was reputably attributable to his many wives, who were mostly part of foreign, diplomatic marriages. These women were described in the Bible as "strange women which caused him to sin" (Nehemiah 13:26). When Israelites married outsider, or 'unregulated mingling' with foreigners took place, it was deemed highly undesirable; their religious purity was endangered, and they risked doing 'wickedness' (1 Maccabees 1:15). This position was a change from earlier times, as Abraham and King David both had foreign wives (Genesis 11; 1 Samuel 27:3). The effects of marrying an outsider also included additional dangers, such as religious syncretism, the associated risk of apostasy, and—the most problematic—religious impurity, as commented upon in Ezra 9:11–12:

> You gave through your servants the prophets when you said: "The land you are entering to possess is a land polluted by the corruption of its peoples. By their detestable practices they have filled it with their impurity from one end to the other. Therefore, do not give your daughters in marriage to their sons or take their daughters for your sons. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them at any time, that you may be strong and eat the good things of the land and leave it to your children as an everlasting inheritance."

However, it must be noted that some foreign women were blessed within the Bible, but only if they followed the one true god, Yahweh, with all their heart, and turned their hearts completely from their own 'wicked' pagan gods.

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346 If there was indeed any such Exodus—there is no evidence as yet, for further information on the Exodus debate see Finkelstein and Silberman 2001, 56–59
Abandoning One's Gods for Yahweh

Psalm 45:10, which is known as the wedding psalm, directs the new Israelite wife to "forget your people and your father's house." One example of this order within a later first century CE Greek apocryphal story relates to Joseph and his Egyptian wife Asenath, who out of her deep affection towards her soon-to-be husband, carried out the appropriate ritual mourning (smearing ashes over the body and face, wearing sackcloth, etc.) and renounced her 'evil' gods and religion, from that point forward, worshipping only her husband's god, Yahweh. 347 This concept of 'evil' in connection with the foreign/strange woman contrasts greatly with the traits of the wife of quality presented within the Bible's Proverbs 31:10–31: "She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life (31:12)...She gets up while it is still dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls (31:15)...She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy (31:20)... She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come (31:25)... Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised (31:30)." The ideal woman within the Bible is portrayed hard working, wise, savvy, giving and kind. Additionally, she is pious, respectful (that is, subordinate) to her husband—everything the authors of the Bible felt Jezebel was not. Yet one might say that, paradoxically, Jezebel went above and beyond the call of a good wife. As we have seen in the previous chapter, she cherished Ahab so much that she murdered an innocent person, which of course cannot be condoned in any way, to attain her husband's desire.

Many elite foreign women exchanged via matrimony like Jezebel brought to their new homeland their cultic practices. Many found it difficult to adapt to a life which

designated them an insignificant vassal, in contrast with their somewhat liberated status and power in their motherlands (for example, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Hatti). Jezebel must even have found it difficult to adapt to Israel's topography, as compared to the lushness of the moist sea coast, Samaria would have appeared an arid, desert nation.348

In addition, it would be surprising, given the sexual cults and rituals to which the Bible alludes in connection with Phoenician religion, if Jezebel was a virgin when she married Ahab. It is worth considering whether this 'affliction' was yet another aspect to Jezebel's seemingly 'wicked' character in the opinion of the biblical authors. Frymer-Kensky explains, stories about virgins express biblical concerns about potential marriage partners, also raising questions about Israel's ethnic boundaries with non-Israelites.349 Most of the biblical stories concerning foreign women saw them brought into Israel as brides and, typically, the idea of these 'strange' women as a source of danger to the community was present. Frymer-Kensky further theorises that suspicion of foreign women and their 'elusive' ways may have played a role in the construction by Israelites of all women as 'others'.350

**Jezebel, the Bible and Paganism**

Although there is ample archaeological and textual evidence of pagan worship within Israel, the Deuteronomistic Historians portrayed Jezebel (within her lifetime) as if she were the only person promoting these religions. In other words, she was a scapegoat, and if she didn't historically exist, the biblical authors would have had to invent her,

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348 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 2–3. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
349 For further information on this topic see Frymer-Kensky 1983, 399–414.
as they needed someone to whom to assign the guilt of polytheism. Thus, she was 'wicked', fixated on removing the servants of Yahweh—her religion's competitors—and inaugurating her own Phoenician religion, which she had been inducted into and educated about from birth and which she was loath to renounce. She was the perfect scapegoat and antagonist to Elijah, and the Deuteronomistic Historians' composition of the two figures is a testament to this, as they are presented as binary opposites. She came from the coastlands of Phoenicia, he from the highlands; she worshipped Baal, he worshipped Yahweh; she belonged to husband and father, and therefore had an uxorial but no personal identity, whereas Elijah as a male could transcend kinship boundaries.\footnote{Trible 1995, 171.} It is interesting to note, although they go head-to-head with each other, Jezebel and Elijah never meet in person.\footnote{Gaines 2013, 1 June, 4. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].} Jezebel was an impressive woman in her own right, as not only did she maintain her religious foundations, she engaged in major confrontations with one of Yahweh's most distinguished and faithful prophets, Elijah. The Deuteronomistic Historians consigned blame directly to Jezebel for importing her home religion and subsequently, through to her marriage to Ahab, bringing to Israel a form of paganism that threatened the Israelite monotheistic religion. Jezebel's religion must have been a sizeable threat for the followers of Yahweh to indict her alone for turning their people towards the worship of Baal and Anat.

**Religion in Ancient Israel**

There were two 'foci of identity' within Israelite religion as determined by Professor Rainer Albertz: 'official religion' operated for 'the people' or 'society as a whole',

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\footnote{Trible 1995, 171.}
\footnote{Gaines 2013, 1 June, 4. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].}
whilst 'personal piety' related to the individual within the context of the family.\textsuperscript{353} "Official religion was about the welfare of the nation," writes Beth Nakhai. "It provided the venue for the king to care for his nation by tending to its National Gods… and for the priesthood to articulate an ideology of purity, sin, and atonement through the ritual of sacrifice."\textsuperscript{354} Like the religion of the Phoenicians, Canaanite (early Israelite) religion was depicted as a "patriarchal and polytheistic faith, highlighting [the] 'pagan' interest in cosmology and fertility: the establishment of order and the maintenance of life."\textsuperscript{355} The greatest issues of concern to the Israelites in the Iron Age included sustenance, economic survival, health and reproduction; therefore, the family religion had to encompass all these elements.\textsuperscript{356}

According to Nakhai, the shifting political climate of which Jezebel was a part required "the strengthening of national solidarity and the promotion of loyalty to the king through the promulgation of the official religion in outlying areas."\textsuperscript{357} Israel's ideals—although monotheistic—stemmed from polytheistic cultures. This idea is essential in regard to this thesis, as the Israelites in Canaan had appropriated aspects of the local religion into their own, and yet centuries later reprimanded Jezebel in the Bible for introducing a polytheistic cult which was already present (although discouraged) in Israel. Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin states that, in Jezebel's time, "although the official religion of northern Israel was that of Yahweh—the god of Israel—we know from both biblical verses and archaeological discoveries that the cult of Baal and Astarte strongly influenced the local population in the form of folk or

\textsuperscript{353} Albertz 1994, 19. For an in-depth analysis on ancient Near Eastern family religion, see Van Der Toorn 1996.
\textsuperscript{354} Nakhai 2011, 348.
\textsuperscript{355} Trible 1995, 168.
\textsuperscript{356} Nakhai 2011, 350.
\textsuperscript{357} Nakhai 1993, 21.
popular beliefs." Yadin's comments are clearly supported by the archaeological record of Israel.

Household Cult in Ancient Israel

It has been stated by Elizabeth Willet that in the ancient Near East "a woman's house was the centre of her religious as well as her economic activity." Written records of religions in the ancient Near East from around 3000 BCE state that women's religious activities focussed on rituals associated with family events, life passages such as birth and death, and healing. Logically, family interests differ from or supplement national interests, as personal religion concerns itself with the everyday physical welfare of individual family members. Whilst the king worshipped Yahweh, ordinary citizens concurrently worshipped Him and the household gods who belonged to their extended families and neighbourhoods. They honoured these household gods with daily prayers and offerings in domestic shrines rather than large state temples. It is also debatable (and unclear from the archaeological record) how accessible—if at all—the royal sanctuaries of Yahweh were for acts of 'popular worship'.

Typically, 'high places' (Leviticus 26:30; Deuteronomy 12:2, 33:29) were the locations for shrines dedicated to pagan gods of many countries, as the populace linked religion and mythology to the changing of the seasons and other natural phenomena. Anywhere there was a manifestation of a god, a shrine was established and dedicated to him or her. Pagan religion represented a stage of human

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358 Yadin 1975, 181; see also Wyatt 1992, 68–91, for an analysis on the Canaanite dimension in ancient Israelite religion.
359 Willet 2009, 95.
360 Wiesner-Hanks 2011, 113.
363 Nakhai 2011, 351.
consciousness where nature and divinity travelled hand-in-hand—anthropomorphism, when many people of the ancient Near East could not conceive of power and vitality apart from in terms of the cycles of nature.  

While biblical texts validated a centralised national cult involving a male priesthood and community, and religious celebrations only encouraged male participation, household archaeology reveals an undergirding family structure that employed the technical wisdom agency of women and also had a sacred dimension. There is an abundance of archaeological and historical evidence indicating household cult and magic existing within the homes of the ancient Israelites. It is most important to remember that throughout the Iron Age II (c. 970–586 BCE), although the concept of monotheism had begun to take hold, the archaeological record clearly reflects recognition of multiple deities. Ostraca excavated from Samaria (where Ahab and Jezebel's palace was located) and dated to around the eighth century BCE depict a proportion of names compounded with Baal that suggests that no less than a third of the population practised some form of Canaanite religion.

**Archaeological Evidence of Household Cult**

Archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon stated that the 'Astarte/Asherah' plaques are some of the most common cult objects discovered at Israeli sites in excavations of material from the Late Bronze Age Period (1550–1200 BCE) through to the seventh century BCE.

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364 Carmody 1988, 51.
365 Willet 2009, 97–8, see also Porter 2003.
366 See Meyers (2005) for further information on household gods and goddesses in Israel.
367 Nakhai 1993, 195, see also Moore and Kelle 2011, 211.
368 Heaton 1956, 231.
369 Kenyon 1960, 253.
Multitudes of household shrines have been excavated by archaeologists at sites such as Samaria, Jezreel (location of the winter palace of Jezebel and Ahab, built on Naboth's land), Tel Rehov, Tell Dan and Beersheba. These sites yielded small four-horned altars, portable stone altars, and offering stands, cult stands, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figures, model shrines, votive vessels and female figures. These artefacts are all prime indicators of alternative cults in existence and running parallel to the worship of Yahweh.

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371 For an excellent in-depth analysis of excavated Israelite cultic artefacts see Zevit 2001, 267–349.
372 Although often linked in the north to Yahweh, several author's are of the opinion that it could be linked also to either the Egyptian god, Ptah, or a homage to the Canaanite god, Baal. See Beale 2008, 84; Mears 2011, 86; Massey 2003, 674.
Cult stands have been excavated at many Iron Age II sites and were created from a variety of materials such as bronze, stone and clay.\textsuperscript{373} Typically, they were ceramic, with a high cylindrical or square foot and an open bowl on top.\textsuperscript{374} One outstanding example, which demonstrates that not every Israelite venerated Yahweh, was excavated in Ta'anach around 1932, from a multi-roomed temple. The base of the cult stand is square in shape and has four superimposed registers. Jonathan Golden provides the following details: "In the top register, there is a winged sun disk, and in the two central registers there is a pair of winged sphinxes with female heads, wearing the Hathor headdress, and goats eating from a stylised tree, flanked by two lions. In the lower register, two lions are shown flanking a nude female, who grasps their ears."\textsuperscript{375} This complex iconography, much like in the case of the ivories addressed in Chapter Three, can be linked directly with that of the Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Assyrians and Phoenicians.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure28.png}
\caption{From Left to Right: Figure 28: Ta'anach Cult Stand (from Black 2014). Figure 29: Lower Register of Ta'anach Cult Stand (from Black 2014) Figure 30: Greyscale Drawing of Ta'anach Cult Stand (from Gadon 1989)}
\end{figure}

\begin{scriptsize}
\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{373} Zevit 2001, 314–328.
\textsuperscript{374} Golden 2004, 194.
\textsuperscript{375} Golden 2004, 194.
\end{flushleft}
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Polytheistic religion was recognised and practised within ancient Israel, despite the portrait of orthodox, monotheistic religion in the Hebrew Bible and particularly in the Deuteronomistic History and Priestly Literature. The archaeological evidence briefly touched upon here also confirms the existence of a 'nonconformist' cult, in which the biblical prophets were castigated. There is also evidence of pagan cults within Ezekiel 8:14, set in Jerusalem, which describes many women sitting in front of Yahweh's temple mourning the death of Tammuz/Dumuzi, (Ishtar/Inanna's lover), who was a pagan Mesopotamian seasonal deity. Furthermore, in a passage from 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," which is yet another epithet for the illustrious Inanna. Although Jeremiah explains that this tradition was prohibited by the Yahwistic religion, he makes it clear that the entire household took part in it nevertheless.

The 'domestic cult' was a cult centred on women, who were hereditarily educated from a young age. Originally, the 'domestic cult' stemmed from the Babylonian household cults, wherein every household had its respective deity, who resided within the family shrine. These personal deities were expected to take an interest in the everyday lives of their venerate. In return for answering prayers, giving aid in times of need, healing, and watching over the family, the deities would be treated like valued kin. Typical worship involved model shrines, incense stands, and stone altars, which were placed on platforms or benches, or in alcoves or niches. Additionally, portable protection came in the form of amulets, cultic figures and talismans of

377 Van Der Toorn 1994, 37–8; see also Van Der Toorn 1996, 11–119.
378 Nakhai 2011, 353; see also Zevit 276–314.
selected deities, which were worn and carried about the person (see below for examples).

Even within the Bible we have evidence of household gods in Israel. In the story of Rachel and Laban, Rachael flees with her husband and takes her father's teraphim—the household gods—with her (Genesis 31:19). The teraphim were characteristically small idols or 'images' of human shape. They were used in rites involving magic, adoration and consultation, and their worship was often blended with that of Yahweh. From many passages in the Old Testament it appears that teraphim were sometimes—not always—an accepted object of worship and most likely fell under the umbrella of Yahwism (Genesis 31; Judges 18; Hosea 3:4).

Prostitutes Priestesses and Widows

Prostitutes, priestesses and even sacred prostitutes are relentlessly persecuted within the Bible, which associates very specific meanings with the word 'prostitute'. Primarily, it means a woman for hire, yet it can also denote someone who pursues gods other than Yahweh. As we have already examined the 'prostitution' of Jezebel in regard to her venerating other gods, we shall here briefly look to the Bible to assess

379 For a thorough assessment of the story of Rachel see Zierler 2004.
380 Heaton 1956, 232; see also Van Der Torn 1996, 183–205.
381 Heaton 1956, 232.
the meaning of the word 'prostitute' as in these selected passages, it specifically applies to priestesses. It is unequivocally stated in the Bible that "No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute" (Deuteronomy 23:17) and Hosea further elaborates on this 'wicked' deed stating that "the men consort with prostitutes, and they sacrifice with the shrine prostitutes," and thus they are ruined in the eyes of the Lord (4:14).

Additionally, priestesses within the Bible who worshipped pagan deities were often correlated with prostitutes, through passages warning the Israelites of this 'evil' occupation (Leviticus 21; Deuteronomy 23:17–18; Ezekiel 23 etc.). These women were also associated with witchcraft, perhaps in connection with the rituals they performed (for example, Nahum 3:4; Leviticus 7:6; Acts 17:11; Galatians 5:16–21).

In regards to the hiring of a woman to fulfil one's sexual needs, Martha Roth explains that, unlike Israel, Mesopotamia had a definite and appropriate place for prostitution.382 A married man was able to seek out a prostitute without being accused of adultery, but only if the prostitute was married to a third party.383 Prostitution was not considered in Mesopotamian society to be morally reprehensible, but more something in need of law codes that enforced, regulated and supported women in this profession.384

382 Roth 2006, 24.
383 Roth 2006, 25.
384 There were also male prostitutes' which bears acknowledging, but they go way beyond the scope of this thesis. See Roth 2006, 35.
It is of interest here that Inanna, as mentioned in Chapter Two, was acknowledged as 'Lady of myriad offices' and one of these offices included goddess and patron of harlots, women and men on the outskirts of society.\textsuperscript{385}

O harlot, you set out for the alehouse,  
O Inanna, you are bent on going into your (usual) window (to solicit) a lover-  
O Inanna, mistress of myriad offices,  
No god rivals you!...  
You, my lady, dress like one of no repute in a single garment,  
The beads (the sign) of a harlot  
You put around your neck.  
It is you that hail men from the alehouse!\textsuperscript{386}

It would appear that these women all dressed alike, 'in a single garment' and decked out in the beads of the harlot, so that others within the society would be easily aware of their profession (it was almost like a uniform). Then, through a window, they solicited offers from men entering and leaving the taverns. A scene of this type appears in iconography known as the 'woman in the window',\textsuperscript{387} which is shown on many ivory plaques excavated throughout the ancient Near East.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figures/figures32-35.png}
\caption{Woman in the Window Ivory Plaque (from the Met Museum 2014).}
\caption{Woman in the Window Ivory Plaque (from the British Museum 2014).}
\caption{Woman in the Window Ivory Plaque in Bible (from Women in the Bible 2013).}
\caption{Woman in the Window Plaque (from the Met Museum 2014).}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{385} Nemat-Nejat 1999, 103.  
\textsuperscript{386} Nemat-Nejat 1999, 103.  
\textsuperscript{387} Seeman 2004, 15–26.
It is intriguing to note here that the Assyrian and Babylonian Ishtar was often identified as Kilili, among whose designated epithets were Kilili Musirtu, 'Kilili who leans [peeps] out (of the window)', and Kilili ša apāti, 'Kilili of the windows', highlighting the postures characteristically used by prostitutes to entice men and fill them with lust. At her temple in Ashur, it was also customary for devotees of Ishtar to place before her image offerings in the form of small terracotta altars in the shape of houses, with scholar's such as Balaji Mundkur postulating that they were perhaps associated with prostitutes. Most frequently these were two-storeyed with triangular windows, with serpents—one of the goddess's emblems—winding about the walls (see below, Figs 36–38).

In one of Jezebel's final scenes in the Book of Kings, she hears that Jehu, her family's murderer, is approaching. She therefore adorns herself with make-up, dresses her hair and looks out the window (2 Kings 9:30). This could very well be an allusion to the woman in the window plaques—a subtle insult to Jezebel, likening her to the

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388 Mundkur 1978, 268.
389 Mundkur 1978, 268.
390 Mundkur 1978, 263.
prostitutes of old, gazing out the window to solicit a man; in this case, Jehu.\footnote{There are a select few women mentioned within the Bible (that were portrayed negatively by the Deuteronomistic Historians) who have also looked out from an upper window, much like Jezebel did, which will be discussed in the following chapter.} Jezebel's 'soliciting' of Jehu will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter. It should be noted here, however, that although prostitution— one of the oldest professions known to man—was acknowledged as if not reputable employment, then nevertheless part of the fabric of society, the woman herself was considered an outsider. The Israelites constantly condemned the profession, stating: "There shall be no prostitute of the daughters of Israel..." (Deuteronomy 23:17). Israelite priests are explicitly warned that "they must not marry a woman who is a prostitute, or profane; neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her husband: for he is holy to his God" (Leviticus 21:7).

Pagan priestesses, as briefly mentioned earlier, were discriminated against, as they were often linked with prostitution within the Bible. The biblical writers were of the opinion that because many of these women engaged in sexual activity in the temples, they should be considered temple or ritual prostitutes. The counter-arguments should also be considered: from around the late 1970s and '80s, many scholars felt that the phenomenon known as cultic prostitution was itself a myth, as there is no substantive textual or archaeological evidence.\footnote{Not referring to Sacred Temple prostitution.} Joan Westenholz (1989) concluded that there was no evidence to suggest that there was ever an institution of this type in Mesopotamia and that "it [was] the Greeks," such as Herodotus and Strabo, "and their denigration of the female sex and of barbarians that caused them to lump together the negative attributes of [religion and prostitution] in their description of Babylon and its cultic rites."\footnote{Yee 2012, 301; see also Marsman 2012, 497.}

Frymer-Kensky expands on this theory, suggesting there is no substantial evidence to
prove that Mesopotamian priestesses performed sexual acts as part of their profession.\textsuperscript{395} However, one piece of evidence affirms that at least once a year sexual intercourse was required, if only on the part of the head priestess; this was during the Sacred Marriage Rite, which took place as part of New Year celebrations. The \textit{Entu}, the high priestess in Sumer and representative of Inanna on earth, copulated with the king on a sacred bed within the temple to ensure victory in warfare, and, just as importantly, guarantee the fertility of the land.\textsuperscript{396} Inanna was the divine link to the world of the gods, and when she took the king as her lover in the New Year's festival, the pair formed a bridge between the people and their gods.\textsuperscript{397}

Sacred/temple priestesses were also identified as the 'undefiled', with the Akkadian title, \textit{qadishtu}, literally translating as 'sanctified woman' or 'holy woman'.\textsuperscript{398} Women in other countries around the ancient Near East have also been identified as taking on this sacred type of employment. The high priestess, \textit{Entu}, in Sumer was identified in Anatolia as the \textit{Tawawanna}—the goddess's incarnation on earth.\textsuperscript{399} As feminist author Merlin Stone states, "the use of the word 'prostitute' as a translation for \textit{qadishtu} not only negates the sanctity of that which was held sacred, but suggests, by the inferences and social implications of the word, an ethnocentric subjectivity on the part of the writer...lead[ing] the reader to a misinterpretation of the religious beliefs and social structure of the period."\textsuperscript{400} The \textit{qadishtu} were selected from among hundreds of women; their task was to perform certain daily rituals (not always of a sexual nature), such as interpreting dreams and omens, and often they acted as the

\textsuperscript{395} Frymer-Kensky 1992, 201; see also Roth 2006, 23.
\textsuperscript{396} Frymer-Kensky 1992, 59–62; see also Roth 2006, 23.
\textsuperscript{397} Frymer-Kensky 1992, 58.
\textsuperscript{398} Stone 1978, 157.
\textsuperscript{399} Stone 1978, 131.
\textsuperscript{400} Stone 1978, 157.
mouthpiece of their god, something which intimidated and angered the prophets of the Bible. The Bible portrays their profession as 'wickedness'; firstly, for venerating foreign gods, and secondly, for employing witchcraft.

Priestesses were in fact vitally important figures and in many countries around the ancient Near East (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Phoenicia, etc.), usually where law codes placed fewer restrictions on women, they were feared and yet also shown a great amount of respect by society. This respect, and the pivotal role these women played, can also be seen in later, Hellenistic, times, demonstrating that "in the sacred and ritual activities of the community, the active presence of women in the public world is not merely tolerated but required." The prophet Hosea constantly generated objections to the priestesses within the Bible, and claimed that they continued to exercise their functions with undiminished zeal in his day (approximately the eighth century BCE), despite condemnation of them by the Israelite leaders (Hosea 4:12–13).

Another position in which a woman could sometimes hold power in society was that of a widow. In the ancient Near East, when a woman became a widow she quite often became more active in society, legally and socially. If she was past childbearing age, this was deemed somewhat acceptable, as she was often left the single guardian of her children and therefore had control of the family finances. This was only allowed if her sons were too young to take control of running the family and she had no other close male relatives, much like the situation of many of the queens in Chapter One.

401 Gould 1980, 55.
402 Stone 1978, 158–160
who came to power after their husbands' deaths. Yet, although a certain degree of autonomy was permitted by society, a widow was also to be observed carefully, purely because she was not under direct control of a husband. More often than not she would be controlled by her husband's brother(s), her father, or even by her sons (if they were of age). Nevertheless, she could be seen as posing a threat to society due to having a greater degree of freedom than was typical for women. Frequently, the widow, with her change in social status and additional freedom, worried other members of society, and in Israel she would often be relegated to the category of the 'other/outsider', alongside foreigners, sorceresses and prostitutes.

Additionally, widowhood was seen as a worrisome fate for many women, who in losing their husbands also lost the family income. However, in Israel there was a system to counter this threat. The Israelites were known to practise Levirate law, "to raise up seed to the departed brother" (Genesis 38:8; Deuteronomy 25:5–10), an ancient custom ordained by Moses whereby after the death of a woman's husband, she was often wed to one of her deceased husband's kin, or alternatively placed under the authority of her eldest son, rather than being left to act independently. Any child that the woman bore to her new husband would be considered her deceased husband's heir. She would once again be provided with the finances to run her household. Levirate marriage was also another way to keep inheritance, such as land, within the extended family. On the other hand, Levirate marriage could be seen as aiding the widow by giving her support (financially and emotionally) and reducing her risk of being left alone and on the outskirts of society. Elderly women who were widows/outsiders and seen as 'strange' and 'threatening' to the populace were the first

404 Wiesner-Hanks 2011, 29.
to be accused as witches, and with no husband or children to vouch for them, they were rarely able to refute the accusations successfully. It was a stereotype that lingered and was revived with gusto during the great medieval witch-hunts.

**Magic, Sorcery, 'Witches' and the Role of the Queen Mother**

Magic and divination were unequivocally condemned in the Old Testament, but typically this was *private* and *unauthorised* magic, not the miracles (magic) worked by prophets and priests as instruments of God.\(^{405}\) However, in ancient societies *all* magical powers inspired the deepest dread and fear, but also respect, among members of the community.\(^{406}\) It was a fine line that the magicians had to walk, as their job usually involved liaisons with the spirit world, and most civilisations like the Mesopotamians had a deeply ingrained fear of—and respect for—the deceased.\(^{407}\) They did not speak of death for fear of summoning it, using euphemisms to address it.\(^{408}\) They looked upon people that could interact with the other side with awe.

Magic, sexual power and healing were often mentioned in the ancient texts, as was control of the weather—a seemingly divine trait and one of utmost importance to pagans, as their religions were linked to the seasons.\(^{409}\) Their connection with the spirit world was thought to give shamans, witches and sorcerers the ability to do 'good' or 'evil', with the latter activities being labelled black magic or witchcraft by those outside their traditions.\(^{410}\) The witch was attributed mysterious knowledge and secret deadly power by men, and was thus capable of inspiring fear and hatred in

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\(^{405}\) Cavendish 1990, 55.
\(^{406}\) Creed 1993, 74.
\(^{407}\) Nemet-Najat 1998, 141.
\(^{408}\) Nemet-Najat 1998, 141.
\(^{409}\) Bach 1997, 169; see also Lofls 1949, 161.
\(^{410}\) Wiesner-Hanks 2011, 112.
male-dominated societies. She reversed the 'natural order' of male dominance, becoming a wildly exaggerated stereotype of a woman who does not stay dutifully at home, obedient to her menfolk; in other words, she is in no way the 'ideal' Israelite wife of Proverbs 31.\textsuperscript{411} Gary Beckman states that in the ancient Near East, "more than half of these authorities on magic were women... and the practitioners of these rites were not the priests and temple employees of the state cult," rather they were just regular people in the town/village, "most often called 'seer' if male, or 'old woman' if female."\textsuperscript{412}

Many passages in the Bible condemned both men and women for illicit magical practices, thereby acknowledging that women did indeed engage in sorcery within this period and it was considered a major threat to the prophets and the practice of the monotheistic religion of Israel.\textsuperscript{413} Once again we see the fear of 'outsiders' who were threatening and tainting (in the opinions of the biblical redactors) the 'pure' religion of Yahweh. Deuteronomy 18:10 thoroughly condemns any priest "...who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer or one who conjunction spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead." Although this is purely in regards to the priests, this sort or sorcery was condemned by society by anyone caught practicing it.\textsuperscript{414} Leviticus 20:27 takes this censure to a greater extent by stating that "A man or a woman who is a medium, or who has familiar spirits, shall surely be put to death; they shall stone them with stones. Their blood shall be upon them."

\textsuperscript{411} Cavendish 1990, 35.  
\textsuperscript{412} Beckman 2005, 374.  
\textsuperscript{413} Meyers 2005, 47.  
\textsuperscript{414} Susan Ackerman (2015, 20), states that "...It could be that these sorcerers include women, given that Hebrew uses grammatically masculine forms when referring to collectives that include both men and women; it could thus also be that women are included in the collective 'sorcerer' in Deuteronomy 18:10."
The power of magic (much like women's power) was often deemed acceptable in the Bible if it was used in the service of god, king, and country. In some situations like Saul, when there was a disastrous outcome or ending to the tale, the Deuteronomistic Historians would look for reasons and would exploit them as explanations for the downfall. The Bible states that a major reason why King Saul of Israel died was that he consulted a medium for guidance (1 Chronicles 10:13). The 'Woman/Witch of Endor' is the woman from whom Saul sought aid to call up the deceased prophet Samuel for advice on the war with the Philistines. The witch is told she will not be punished because the magic she was performing was on 'God's business' (1 Samuel 28). Although her magic involved evil spirits, and was thus officially forbidden by the state, it was regarded by the biblical authors as legitimate as its motives were 'pure' and it was done in the name of Yahweh, for the people of Israel.415 Another woman in the Old Testament, named Huldah, was a prophetess who was consulted and prophesied to the high priest and king's cabinet in her home with no repercussions (2 Kings 22:14–20). Women were often known to sew wristbands and don head covering to predict future events (Ezekiel 13:18–23), which were seen as harmful actions by the prophets.

Manasseh, another king of Judah, caused much evil in the eyes of God, rebuilding the high places, creating wooden altars to Baal and, furthermore, making his sons pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom (2 Chronicles 33). He was a soothsayer, practised witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted with mediums and spiritists (2 Chronicles 33). This theme of consulting with such people had the prophet Isaiah 8:19 condemning his own flock: "And when they say to you, 'Seek those who

415 Cavendish 1990, 61.
are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?"

Scholars are fortunate enough to have copious archaeological and textual evidence from the humbler level of folk magic. Folk magic incorporates healing charms, image magic, love potions, divination by omens and portents, dreams, palmistry, lucky charms and amulets, all regularly applied and interpreted. Often jewellery and accessories were used to deflect evil forces placed on women's cooking and weaving tools. Some of the most important artefacts excavated around the ancient Near East were employed in preventing infant mortality. Ivory pendants featuring motifs such as the cow nursing a calf, blue jewellery plaques, goddess reliefs, Bes figurines and evil eyes were used in birthing rituals all around the ancient Near East. These religious ephemera are consistently excavated in Israelite four-roomed houses dating from the Iron Age I and II (c. 1200–586 BCE), and rituals for protection, reproduction and general wellbeing were enacted in various locations throughout the houses—a general sign of the women's domestic cult.

Figure 39: Bes Figurine (from Lessing Images 2014)  Figure 40: Protection Figurines/Amulets from Gath (from Joeziel 2006).

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416 Cavendish 1990, 61.
417 Willet 1999, 90.
418 Cavendish 1990, 60–63.
419 Nakhai 2011, 356. For further Iron Age dates, see Moore and Kelle 2011, 211.
Mesopotamian women also employed these amulets, statues and incantations to stop their infants being sickened by Lamashtu and Lillith, demons who would steal and kill them.\textsuperscript{420} It must be kept in mind, however, that in some countries, including Egypt, Mesopotamia and the lands of the Hittites, there were no boundaries separating 'magic' from 'religion'. Both shaped everyday life, with spells and counter-spells available for every facet of experience and faith.\textsuperscript{421}

With the assistance of archaeology and texts, scholars of the ancient Near East have been able to affirm that there were indeed many forms of household cult running parallel with the Israelite state cult of Yahwism. The Canaanites, who inhabited the land earlier, and then the Israelites venerated an entire pantheon of gods. Furthermore, although it was also condemned within the Bible, intermarriage to Canaanites and the citizens of other countries did occur and thus foreign beliefs and practices would have been imported. These beliefs and practices could also have been diffused by the Israelites who came to inhabit Canaan; as is well established, the ancient Near East was never stagnant. As the Israelite state cult was monotheism and a male-dominated religion, women generally veered towards the domestic cult. Conversely, it appears that there was an avenue by which the monarchs of Israel could give their mothers the position of \textit{Gebira}, an appointment which allowed them to help maintain the state cult of Israel. However, some queen mothers exploited this post, using their position of power to worship foreign deities, which led to their condemnation within the Bible.

\textbf{The Position of 'Gebira' and Her Role in the State Cult}

Royal women of the ancient Near East customarily participated in religious activities on three separate levels—as private individuals, as occasional celebrants, or as official

\textsuperscript{420} Willet 2009, 91.
\textsuperscript{421} Nemet-Nejat 1999, 105.
priestesses, whose lives thus became dedicated to the service of their country's gods. In regards to the first two groups (as priestesses generally did not marry), once wed to a foreign husband many of these women, as we have seen with the Phoenician Jezebel, continued their cultic duties, as the position of a high priestess was held for life. Suggestions have been made by Stone that in the ancient Near East when a woman became queen she also gained the title of high priestess—the goddess's incarnation upon earth—a position supposedly resulting from her marriage to the king; that is, god's incarnation on earth. These women held complementary power to that of their husbands, and in ancient Israel, in the event of being named Gebira (queen mother), they ran and maintained the practices of the State cult. Jezebel and her Phoenician family alike held positions of power and had sacerdotal functions; this has been evidenced archaeologically with the excavations of Phoenician inscriptions of kings and queens naming themselves firstly as a 'priest' or 'priestess' (for example of Astarte or Baal), before their royal titles.

As discussed previously, Jezebel was a priestess of the Phoenician Baal, which posed two problems for the Israelites. The first was the fact that these ancient Near Eastern women in their capacity as priestesses were seen to have distinct magical abilities, which added to their 'foreignness' and generated fear and anger within the community, as religion in Israel was typically 'men's business'. Secondly, they were perceived as a threat to the Israelite god Yahweh, but even more so to his prophets. As Stone states, the problem "was not only the belief that the priestesses could see into the future...but the idea that these women were understood to be in direct

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422 Melville 2005, 242
425 Aubet and Turton 2001, 40; see also Harden 1971, 93.
427 As discussed in a previous chapter. Markoe 2000, 121.
communication with the deity who possessed the wisdom of the universe." The prophets of Yahweh believed that no-one but themselves should possess the power to communicate directly with God.

The ill-fated death of Ahab and the subsequent coronation of Ahaziah (2 Kings 11) allowed Jezebel to rise to the position of Gebira—an illustrious title, as within the somewhat isolated Israelite royal court, a woman could not enjoy an institutional position of supreme influence unless she was herself the 'Queen Mother' and then only if deemed exceptional in this role would she be granted the rare title of Gebira, 'Lady'. Stories within the Bible illustrate that the title was rarely employed, and from the ninth century BCE—Asa and Ahab's era—it was coupled with the title of 'Queen Mother'. The relative rarity of the title suggests that it was somewhat abnormal to confer a formal, institutional position of power on a king's mother. Furthermore, the title conveys that the queen could only come into complete authority after the death of her husband and the subsequent coronation of her son. Biblical scholars such as Susan Ackerman, Zifriira Ben-Barak and Sarah Melville have also postulated that queen mothers played a crucial role in determining royal succession, for example, when attempting to establish a beloved younger son as monarch instead of his older brother, as we saw in Chapter Two.

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429 Brenner 1985, 17; see also Ackerman 1993, 385. Ackerman (1003, 385) also states: "The term Gebira/geberet is used fifteen times with the Hebrew Bible. In Genesis 16:4, 8, and 9 it is applied as 'mistress' (describing Sarah's relationship with Hagar), and this translation is also applied in 2 Kings 5:3; Psalm 123:2; Proverbs. 30:23; and Isaiah 24:2; 45:5,7. Within 1 Kings 1:19, Gebira should be translated as 'queen'. Referring to the wife of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Elsewhere in Kings, and also in Chronicles and Jeremiah (1 Kings 15:13; 2 Kings 10:13; 2 Chronicles 15:16; Jeremiah 13:18; 29:2), the term means 'Queen Mother'."
430 Brenner 1985, 18.
432 Richard 2003, 150.
The title *Gebira* in the ancient Near East was applied to Israelite queen mothers, who can also be compared to the queen mothers of Ugarit, Assyria, Phoenicia and the Hittites.\(^{433}\) These *Gebiras* not only fostered their sons' interests regarding the throne, but it has been postulated by Ben-Barak that they exercised their power in cultic matters, and were even given the task of being the king's chief counsellor.\(^{434}\) Jezebel, notably, was the only queen mother in the Northern Kingdom of Israel to bear the title of *Gebira*. The last kinsmen of the house of Omri were considered by biblical scholars such as Siegfried Hermann as weaklings; thus, after the death of Ahab, they were increasingly influenced by the queen mother, Jezebel, who still presided over court.\(^{435}\) Her authority was considered substantial within the cult/religious spheres and her sons followed in her footsteps and Ahab's, "doing what was evil in the sight of the lord" (2 Kings 8:27) and honouring their mother's foreign deities.

There were many outstanding queen mothers around the ancient Near East, who, like Jezebel, exploited their son's position to acquire power for themselves and influence the state cult. Another fitting example in the Bible of a woman taking advantage of her son's status was the queen mother Maacah.\(^{436}\) Maacah in the Old Testament, was, like Jezebel, associated with a cultic religious function. This is evidenced as King Asa "also removed Maacah his grandmother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image and burned it by the Brook Kidron" (1 Kings 15:13). This is a direct reference to the Canaanite and Phoenician goddess, Asherah,\(^{437}\) who was a direct threat to Yahweh, and was

\(^{433}\) Melville 2004, 52–55; see also Bryce 2002, 21, 29.


\(^{435}\) Hermann 1975, 220.

\(^{436}\) For information on Maacah's background, see Wyatt 1985.

\(^{437}\) Debatably, once known as Yahweh's wife. Over the course of many centuries she fulfilled a variety of roles. She was mother figure in the divine family, associated with fertility and warfare. She was an amalgamation of
ingrained in the cult of Israel. Maacah was confronted for her 'abominations' on a ritual occasion, and her cult was subsequently destroyed. Israel's state (not local) cult was monotheistic Yahwism, yet Maacah turned her back on Yahweh and followed the goddess religion, as evidenced by her building of an image of Asherah (1 Kings 15:13). Maacah's position in court could also be compared to the Hittite Tawananna, whose institution was also the state cult. An interesting parallel to the charges made against both Maacah and Jezebel were those made within the court of the Hittite King Murshili II (c. 1350 BCE) against the old queen mother. The Tawananna had retained her position of influence after the death of her husband and was accused by the new king of witchcraft and sorcery and importing cult objects from Babylon, all of which were the causes for her ultimate deposition.

Although in Canaan there was an early openness to women in cults, by the Israelite Monarchical period there seem to have been negative reactions and warnings developing, and subsequently women in the cults were referred to as illicit practitioners of non-Israelite rites. Jezebel came to be identified as a sorceress and seductress in later life, while she held the position of queen mother, and she was ultimately removed from that position by means of an assassination at the hand of the 'righteous' newly anointed Yahwist king, Jehu (2 Kings 9:22, 9:33): "When Joram [Jezebel's only surviving son] saw Jehu he asked, 'Do you come in peace, Jehu?' He

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Hittite term meaning queen mother, derived from the name of the chief wife of Hittite King Labarnas, see Moore 1994, 193–195.

It must be noted here that if the Queen Mother's son was to die, and a new king crowned, she retained her position until death.

Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 110.

Bird 1987, 397–420; see also Meyers 2005; Ricks 1995, 137–142.

answered, 'What peace can there be as long as there is so much idolatry and witchcraft from your mother Jezebel?'" (2 Kings 9:22)

In regard to queens using their influence to manipulate royal succession, the Old Testament confirms that younger brothers often leapfrogged their older siblings for the crown, such as in the case of the younger son Solomon. His mother, Bathsheba, played an important role in acquiring the crown for him in 1 Kings 1:11–31. After succeeding in this quest, she was elevated to queen mother with Solomon's coronation and acted as petitioner for her stepson Adonijah, who wished for the hand of his late father's concubine, Abishag the Shunammite. That she was able to do this further demonstrates the significant power and sway of the king's mother: she was able to confront the king on behalf of others, pleading their cases and most importantly, having them listened to. Another passage that verifies Bathsheba's power is as follows: "And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother; so she sat at his right hand" (1 Kings 2:19). A king, the head of the country, was seen to be deferring to his mother in a visual display of the power she wielded.

There is some debate as to the amount of power which a queen mother wielded, and evidence of this can be found in 2 Kings 24:12 and Jeremiah 22:26. Queen Mother Nehushta and her son Jehoiachin, King of Judah (who did evil in the sight of the Lord) were condemned together, exiled from their homeland of Judah, and became captives of the king of Babylon. Susan Ackerman suggests this was due to the fact that king and queen mother were the nation's most powerful authorities.\textsuperscript{444} This is

\textsuperscript{444} Ackerman 1998, 137.
much like the king who ordered the end of Jezebel's life. Jehu, the newly crowned monarch, did not allow any males from the house of Omri to live; thus, he 'wiped the slate clean' and freed the palace of this 'poisonous' and 'tainted' dynasty. Jehu even assassinated the elderly Jezebel, who would have been in her late 50s. Considering Jehu was chosen by God, he must have perceived her as a serious threat.

We can see that in comparison to other ancient Near Eastern countries Israelite monotheists had a fear and dislike of anyone who would not accept their religious agendas. They would denounce them within their religious law codes, labelling them as 'strange', 'other' and outsiders who were to be avoided at all costs, lest they corrupt the faithful. Prostitutes, widows and priestesses, to name a few, were thought to fall within these categories. These women were often linked by the biblical authors to magic and sorcery, which in turn were considered pagan activities. In the eyes of the biblical authors, such activities were to be avoided at all times. However, archaeology has demonstrated that household cults, although not sanctioned by the monotheists, were quite often in existence in Israel, though concealed by the people. Furthermore, women were educated on the household cult as children, yet the whole family took part, each household having its own respected household. For women of the royal house, it seems that they could hold some power in the State cult only once they achieved the position of Queen Mother/Gebira. Even then they could lose their positions for the usual offence—taking part in pagan activities. Jezebel, Queen Mother, murderer and blatant polytheistic pagan, was already in strife with the Deuteronomistic Historians before she adorned herself for death. What chance did she have when their thoughts on adornment related it to 'sexualisation' and 'evil'?
Chapter Five:

The Sexualised Adornment and Death of Jezebel: The Continued Stigma and Subsequent Endeavour of Emancipation

Issues with Adornment in the Bible

It can be perceived from opinions expressed by writers and prophets in both the Old and the New Testaments of the Bible that women who adorned themselves with so-called excess ('adornment' came to include cosmetics, clothing and jewellery) were habitually attributed a sexual nature. There are no passages concerning women's everyday use of jewellery or cosmetics; rather, adornment was represented as a way to lure men into committing adultery and idolatry. There is mention of veiling, but given the copious amount of evidence and scholarship on the subject, a discussion of it is beyond the scope of this thesis. The four major propagators of the link between adornment and sexuality in the Old Testament were the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, Hosea and Jeremiah. Jeremiah once stated, "You, when you are made desolate, what will you do? Though you clothe yourself with scarlet, though you deck yourself with ornaments of gold, though you enlarge your eyes with paint, in vain do you make yourself beautiful; your lovers despise you, they seek your life" (4:30). As we can see, adornment was quite often correlated with the 'strange' woman, discussed in the previous chapter, who was to be avoided at all costs and denounced.

The prophet Ezekiel was the major influence on linking jewellery and sexuality; for example: "Men...came from far away, and when they arrived you bathed yourself for them, painted your eyes and put on your jewellery" (23:40). He further elaborates this negative notion of adornment and sexuality by associating it with the worship of pagan gods: "You also took the fine jewellery I [God] gave you, the jewellery made
of my gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them" (16:17); and, "You took some of your garments, and made for yourself colourful shrines, and on them played the whore; nothing like this has ever been or ever shall be" (Ezekiel 16:16). Hosea also affirms adornment is linked with pagan worship, which he says angers Yahweh: "I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewellery, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot," said the Lord' (Hosea 2:13).445 This conviction that adornment is connected to sexuality and veneration of 'other' gods is not limited to the Old Testament; it is also overtly discouraged within the New Testament. The apostle Peter stated, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes; Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful" (1 Peter 3:3–5). Timothy, who was once apprenticed to the apostle Paul, further embellished this view by stating that he "want[ed] women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes" (1 Timothy 2:9). In other words, Israelite women should present themselves as humble and not tempt men by drawing attention to themselves with adornments and cosmetics, lest they become seductresses and thus cause men to commit adultery (i.e., Hosea 4:14; Ezekiel 16; Proverbs 2; Revelation 2:22, Proverbs 5).

445 Ironically, Hosea married a prostitute named Gomer on God's orders to "Go, take for yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the Lord" (Hosea 1:2).
Isaiah, another passionate Yahweh adherent, states that "the Lord [claimed], 'The women of Zion are haughty, walking along with outstretched necks, flirting with their eyes, strutting along with swaying hips, with ornaments jingling on their ankles.' Therefore the Lord will bring sores on the heads of the women of Zion; the Lord will make their scalps bald" (3:16–17). In addition to this punishment, "the Lord will snatch away their finery: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, the earrings and bracelets and veils, the headdresses and anklets and sashes, the perfume bottles and charms, the signet rings and nose rings, the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses and mirrors, and the linen garments and tiaras and shawls" (3:18–23). We can see that the prophets of Yahweh and the Deuteronomistic Historians thoroughly condemned the adornment of women, as it not only sexualised and empowered them, but also linked them with pagan worship, which was a direct threat to Yahwism.

Maxwell-Hyslop hypothesises that one of the primary reasons why the biblical authors loathed and denounced the adornment of women with jewellery with such fervour was due to the connection with foreign deities. She states that "the magical properties with which Sumerians [and other ancient Near Eastern countries] endowed gold, silver, and different kinds of precious stones and other metals… is a point worth stressing when considering the religious concepts which underlie the use of jewellery." The theory was that gold and silver and other metals were often associated with different gods and goddesses, and that this could explain the widespread use of these materials not only in the temple rituals performed by the priests and priestesses, but also in elaborate rituals directed against evil spirits.

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446 For further information on monotheism at the time of Isaiah see Smith 2001, 179–194.
The stereotype of adornment being linked to sexuality is ingrained in the very fabric of society. Even today, women wearing heavy cosmetics, 'provocative' clothing and jewellery are often called whores of 'Jezebels'. Sadly, in the eyes of the Deuteronomistic Historians, Jezebel was condemning herself by adorning herself before her confrontation with Jehu. Why have these simple actions led to Jezebel's name being sexualised and condemned throughout history?

The Sexualisation of 'Jezebels' and Subsequent Gender Panic Within

Other Texts

The sexualisation of Jezebel is a theme that continuously recurs throughout literary history. Her sexuality is intrinsically linked with her 'wicked' deeds, which the Bible forcefully condemns. Before beginning an analysis of her death in the Bible, it is important to examine the history of scholarly opinion to the present day about Jezebel (both positive and negative), in which she has evolved from highly corruptible, sexually licentious women to a reclaimed powerful female hero, whose actions are perceived as just and brave. One theory is that of 'gender panic', which is the sense of

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448 Maxwell-Hyslop 1960, 106. Maxwell-Hyslop throughout her career continued to elaborate this theory; see also Maxwell-Hyslop 1971.
alarm, consternation, and anger that results from the loss of male authority, and in turn leads to the degradation of the women who took this authority. We can see this theme running throughout the Old Testament, and it will be at the core of a central argument in this chapter.

In the Hebrew Bible, its 'authors' actually punned on Jezebel's name, which honoured Baal, in such a way as to signify 'dung'. A passage in Revelation, dated to much later than the Hebrew Bible, speaks of an evil woman, likewise named Jezebel, "who calls herself a prophetess" (Revelation 2:20). She pilots her followers into sexual immorality and the eating of foods sacrificed to the idols. Her character and spirit is compared to "a shark; she is most vicious and dangerous. She circles the lives of others looking for teachable, seducible, controllable, 'disciples' of her own." This Jezebel is unwilling to repent, thus her punishment from John of Patos (who wrote Revelation): "I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways" (Revelation 2:22), and, "I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds" (Revelation 2:23). This passage is an example of how, although times had changed, the name Jezebel was still associated with evil, sexuality and pagan worship. The Jezebel in Revelation is punished for her offence in two most horrible ways, the first through her own body, in the form of a scene of gang rape, and the second through her procreative body, with the death of her children, presumably justified because they were conceived through sexual immorality.

449 Quinby 1999, 100.
450 Said to have been written by the Apostle John, c. 96 AD.
452 Quinby 1999, 106.
The Septuagint, in 3 Reigns 20(21):23, witnesses the introduction of the word 'fornication' being linked with Jezebel, "And to Iezabel the Lord spoke saying 'The dogs shall eat her by the fornication of Iezabel.'" Furthermore, Jezebel was now acknowledged to be connected to actual prostitutes (not prostitutes in the idolatrous sense) and it was stated that "The dogs will lick up your blood, and the prostitutes will wash themselves in your blood" (3 Reigns 20 (21): 20).

The philosopher Philo (20BCE–50CE) through imagery of the biblical harlot elaborated his position that the sexual appetite strives towards fornication, against God's will. Women were viewed as the source of disharmony in society, for they were capable of exposing and exploiting the vulnerability of men (in this instance, Jezebel exploiting Ahab, and Solomon's wives exploiting him), utilising their 'charms' to lead them astray. Philo's Jezebel epitomised the seductive and largely sexual type—she was a woman unconstrained by 'pure' and 'wholesome' biblical monotheism and embodied religious anarchy; in other words, she was trouble. The goddesses Aphrodite and Ishtar were also seen as personifications of 'Pleasure', turning decent men (decent, that is, before meeting these females) away from their God. Like Jezebel, they must be avoided at all times, lest the male became entrapped by their sexual allure.

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453 Also known as 'LXX' and abbreviated from Interpretation septuaginta virorum ('the translation by the seventy men') (debatably 72) with early texts established around the second century BCE. It is the translation of the Hebrew Bible into a Koine Greek version. It is also a reference point and a precursor in regard to the further downfall and perversion of Jezebel in the Middle Ages.
455 Davies 2003, 71.
Jezebel's apparently risqué nature was further emphasised when she was correlated with such biblical 'wicked' women as Eve, Mary Magdalene and Delilah. It was Jezebel's character which sustained the bulk of abuse during the Middle Ages, a reflection on the status of women and their religious positions at a time when males were dominant. An additional belief was that women of this time were in need of protection because of their 'soft' and 'pale' skin. Wealthy upper-class women were seen as 'undeveloped,' as they weren't outside toiling in the fields.\textsuperscript{457} Male scholars of the Middle Ages, such as Jerome, Ambrose and Isidore of Seville, perceived Jezebel as a murderously pagan and tyrannical queen, an outsider who grotesquely offended the Israelites and the beliefs they conveyed.\textsuperscript{458} They claimed she brought with her from her Phoenician homeland both a practice of religion and a conception of monarchy which were loathsome in the eyes of the Israelites,\textsuperscript{459} and that she flaunted covenant law, perverted the customary invocation of God's name in oaths, and was also a murderer.\textsuperscript{460} These writers sided with Elijah—not the Elijah who fled in fear of Jezebel's vengeance, but rather the man who left in order to distance himself from those sinful and eternally damned people represented by the pagan queen.

As can be seen, numerous medieval writers associated Jezebel with sexually licentious women, for which the Talmud (written approximately 500 CE with an oral tradition dating back centuries before that) bears the brunt of the responsibility. Illyrian Christian priest Jerome (c. 347CE–420CE) stated that it was 'evil days' in the time of Ahab and Jezebel,\textsuperscript{461} maintaining that they murdered Naboth to make a

\textsuperscript{457} Bennet and Karras 2013, 362–378.
\textsuperscript{458} Ziolkowski 1989, 5.
\textsuperscript{459} Gaines 1999, 67.
\textsuperscript{460} Ziolkowski 1989, 5–7.
\textsuperscript{461} Kelly 1975, 222.
pleasure garden—not for olive and fig trees but a "vineyard [that was] the vineyard of Sodom (Babylonian Talmud Shabbos 11a)."

The Babylonian Talmud

The Jezebel of the Old Testament was presented by biblical exegetes first on the literal level of blasphemer, idolater, and persecutor, and later in a more complex way involving everlasting death, spiritual wickedness, and greed. The Babylonian Talmud also gave these writers an opening for further denigration of the spirit of Jezebel. The Jewish tradition of associating Jezebel with harlotry and idolatry encouraged the belief that she was indeed a prostitute, believing in 'dirty pagan' ideals. The Septuagint (dated around the third century BCE) introduced the notion of Jezebel as harlot and expanded on Elijah's prophecy: "You slew him and took possession of his inheritance. For this reason, in this place, wherein the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, they shall lick the blood and harlots shall bathe in thy blood" (3 Reigns 20 (21). It was not until the Old Latin variant of 3 Reigns 21:19, which mentioned the word fornicationes (prostitution) and hortus (pleasure ground), that Jezebel acquired the first traces of a reputation for sexual misconduct. These notions led the character of Jezebel into a downward spiral of notoriety for sexual outrageousness, and subsequently meant that her name was added to the other list of 'bad girls' of the Bible.

The Talmud also filled many voids in regard to the life of Jezebel. Once more, it emphasised the sexual and erotic side of Jezebel, the woman dominating Ahab. In Sanhedrin, 39b, Rabbi Raba recounts that Jezebel drew pictures of prostitutes on

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462 Ziolkowski 1989, 8–9.
Ahab's chariot. "Ahab," the rabbi concludes, is "frigid by nature [passionless], so
Jezebel painted pictures of two harlots on his chariot that he might look upon them
and become heated (Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 39b)." Furthermore, the Talmud
also attempts to solve the enigma of why Jezebel's palms and feet remained after her
death and mauling by dogs. The conclusion is that it acknowledges that she was once
virtuous; at a wedding Jezebel was merry and clapped her hands and danced on her
feet in celebration of the marriage—which is a wedding custom in Israel (and many
other ancient Near Eastern countries). Sociologist Leonard Loewenthal further
theorises as to why these body parts remain unscathed. He ascribes it to the henna
placed on a woman's hands and feet, neither the smell nor the taste of which dogs can
abide.464 Although these exceptions reflect that, in the eyes of the monotheists of
Yahweh, Jezebel did perform a few positive deeds, on the whole, her character was
still considered drastically flawed. Scholar Rabbi Elie Wiesel has added his opinion of
Jezebel's character stating that: "In that royal family, clearly it was the woman who
reigned. Jezebel ruled over her husband and therefore over the nation."465 He then
without reservation assigns the fall of Israel to Jezebel—not Ahab—maintaining:

It was she who made the most important—and bloodiest—
decisions; it was she who ordered the slaughter of the true
prophets of the Jewish people, she who built alters to Baal, she
who manipulated people against people, and all against the
God of Israel. If that Jewish kingdom became indifferent to its
own mission, it was her doing. Ahab was too much in love to
protest—and she made him more and more dependent on
her...Clearly, Ahab was so addicted to her that he allowed her
to run the business of government.466

Wiesel clearly holds Jezebel accountable for all transgressions, not Ahab, whose only
sin was being infatuated with her. Jezebel, he argues, subsequently utilised her

464 See Loewenthal (1972, 20–40) for more information on henna and its odour.
466 Wiesel 1981, 49–50.
foreign, feminine wiles—judged as sexual, adulterous and evil in the eyes of the biblical authors—to manipulate Ahab to gain what she desired: power.

The Middle Ages

Archbishop of Milan, Aurelius Ambrosius, (c. 340–397 CE) likened Jezebel to Herodias (Mark 6:25), because they both murdered prophets of God and, furthermore, were adulteresses in his mind. Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 955–c. 1010CE), an English abbot and hard-line Yahweh commentator on the Old Testament, later included another infamous and 'wicked' woman, Delilah (Judges 16), to create a nefarious trio:467

"...But the accursed Herodias slew him by beheading, and received the death of so great a man as a gift for her daughters' dancing...but the accursed woman Jezebel betrayed the righteous Naboth to his death by false witness...and the treacherous Dalila deceived the strong Sampson with flattery, and, his locks being shorn, betrayed him to his foes. Verily there is no worm-kind nor wild-beast kind like in the evilness to an evil woman."468

Archbishop Isidore of Seville (560–536CE), like other contemporary Christian scholars, viewed all pagans of the pre-Christian era as victims of demonic influence, which could be found in every department of their life, and thought their religion was very closely correlated to demon worship.469 Jezebel during her lifetime was the source and instigator of the demonic worship that the Bible states turned the Israelites away from Yahweh; although, as previous chapters observe, there is comprehensive evidence that polytheistic cults already existed in Israel before her arrival.

467 Moorhead 1999, 139; see also Ziolkowski 1989, 19.
469 Isidore 1881, xi; see also Brehaut 1912, 73.
Ælfric further elaborated on Jezebel's character by equating her with a common prostitute. When he 'edited' the tale of her fall/death, her sexuality was emphasised: "And [Joram's] mother Jezebel lived wickedly/ in foul whoredom, and in every iniquity, / until God's vengeance ended her cruelty."\(^{470}\) This arguably sexist and chauvinistic representation of Jezebel as an adulteress was adopted and subsequently embellished by French theologian Anselm of Laon (c. 1050–1117CE). At this point in history, 'Jezebel' had become the preferred label for women who engaged in 'impure' acts of adultery or idolatry. In Anselm's words: "For in our time all those people can be called Jezebel who, having devoted themselves to impurities, praise fornication and consumption of sacrifices made to the idols of false gods."\(^{471}\)

However, the association of Jezebel's name in Medieval times with sins of the flesh does not end there. Her name was dragged through mud, dung, or in some cases, blood. Jerome explained her name's meaning in terms of "a discharge of blood or a stream of blood: but it is better when the name is rendered as 'dung heap.'"\(^{472}\), for when she was hurled down, dogs ate her flesh, just as Elijah had predicted, "and the flesh of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the earth" (4 Rg 9.37).\(^{473}\) The general opinion of historians is that the authors may have mistranslated the Greek word for 'vain' (ῥύσις μάταια: 'vain/empty flow') as 'blood' (ῥύσις αἵματος: flow of blood) and applied it to what Jezebel's name stood for, and for this reason the connection continued to appear for the better part of the Middle Ages.\(^{474}\) Consequently, Jezebel was also linked to menstruation, which it was deemed to make women 'impure and dirty', and as Benedictine abbot, Ambrosius (c. 800 CE) believed,
could also symbolise the sins of the flesh. Latin church father, Apringius (c. 550CE) represented both the blood and the dung etymologies as a warning to the sinful: "What else will be understood by the filth of the dung heap or by the blood, if not the outrage and sin which is given entrance by crime? Rightly, therefore, they are warned that damnation will come, unless perchance they do penance for their evil works." Jezebel was now not just a sinner; she was a soul damned for eternity.

**Jezebel and Queen Mary of England**

Protestant political writer John Knox (1505–1572 CE) likened Mary I Queen of England and other female Catholic rulers of his era to Jezebel, portraying them negatively. "The venom of idolatry by the hands and counsel of those women; but in these our ages, we find cruelty, falsehood, pride, covetousness, deceit, and oppression. In them we also find the spirit of Jezebel...the true religion extinguished." Knox stated that "[God] raised up these Jezebels to be the uttermost of his plagues." He pinpointed the blame on the 'Spirit' of Jezebel and her daughter Athaliah; as both these royal women similarly took charge much like a king, and oppressed the people, showing wickedness and false religions. Through Knox's book, Jezebel gained more notoriety than ever before, unfortunately yet again as the wickedly idolatrous abomination. To add a further discredit to Jezebel's name in 16th-century England, women of any class were suspected of having loose morals if they wore 'paint', and 'Jezebel' became a synonym for 'shameless woman'.

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475 "Jezebel is interpreted as 'a woman who cohabits' or as a 'vain discharge': this suits Synagoga well, who seemed to dwell in the house of the Lord, but who flowed away because of various vain longings". [Hrabanus Maurus], Book 3.1 lines 111:65A quoted in Ziolkowski 1989, 14.
477 Mary I was also a Catholic but in the eyes of John Knox she followed the wrong sect, thus he utilised her and other female ruler's gender for his condemnations. See Breslow 1985, 66.
478 Breslow 1985, 66.
479 Kam 1995, 137.
Jezebel in Regards to African Slaves

Between the 15th and 17th centuries CE, the name Jezebel took on darker, racist connotations. Jezebel became a condescending term used for African slave women.480 'Jezebel' was the designation of the sexually dangerous African slave woman and "by labeling the female slave as Jezebel, the master's sexual abuse was justified by presenting her as the woman who deserved what she got … by labeling the slave woman as a sexual animal—not a real woman at all."481 To make matters worse, white women whose husbands were unfaithful blamed the 'Jezebels' to save face, thereby denying the rape and oppression of these slave women as well as the adultery of their husbands.482 These women, likened to the biblical Jezebel, were outsiders, considered sexually dangerous and the 'strange women' of their time, posing a threat to society.

The Black Athena

Jezebel was marked out in the Bible by her race, sex and religion. The Phoenicians and the Egyptians in history were negatively portrayed in the Bible due to their religious practices and 'otherness'; yet both societies were technologically advanced, with many of their ideals and practices still considered relevant today (for example, geometry and the alphabet.) In the late 1980s, Martin Bernal created waves by arguing that the Greeks, from Herodotus' time (fifth century BCE) onwards, believed that the Egyptians and West Semitic Phoenicians were the founders and progenitors of Greek culture, but that this was rejected a millennium later because of the creation of the 'Aryan' race model, which saw the rise of racial—as opposed to religious—anti-

480 Pippin 1994,196.
481 Morton 1991, 10; see also, Quinby 1999, 113.
482 Morton 1991, 10; see also, Quinby 1999, 113.
Semitism. Furthermore, Bernal's theory holds that in the fifth century CE militant Christian emperors drove Egyptian paganism underground, where it continued to exist behind closed doors. The major blow to this ancient model of the 'black Athena', it is argued, appears to have been dealt by the German-Protestant romantics of the 18th century CE, who created the 'Aryan' Dorian invasions rather than accepting 'contamination' by the Semites and Egyptians. The treatment of the Phoenicians by the French and the English at the beginning of the nineteenth century were polar opposites. The English tended to admire them—the Phoenician merchant princes—yet the other side of the channel, opinion towards them was more or less violently hostile.

**Jezebel as the Femme Fatale**

Figure 41: movie poster of the 'Sins of Jezebel' starring Paulette Goddard (from Movie Posters 1953).

Regarding the scholarship of the 1990s to the present day, Tina Pippin, specialist on the Bible and religion, argues that "the complex and ambiguous character of Jezebel in the Bible serves as an archetypal bitch-woman-queen in misogynistic

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483 Bernal 1987, 337; see also, Whittaker 1988, 1172.
484 Bernal 1987; see also, Whittaker 1988, 1172–3. It is also interesting to note here that in Medieval times, the Egyptians and their culture were greatly admired. See Shavit 2001, 104–6.
485 Bernal 1987, 337.
representations of women...Jezebel is the contradictory, controlling carnal foreign woman.486 Jezebel embodies the classic femme fatale—the fatal woman—a term coined in the 19th century.487 She is sexually alluring, mysterious, foreign and exotic, lustful and intelligent—and she and her lover always meet a tragic and violent fate. She employs her sexuality to gain what she desires, but she is also intelligent; she plots and schemes to obtain her goals. She is the "hard rock of the real that threatens the stability of patriarchy."488 She is the original 'bad girl' to be avoided at all costs, but as always, men such as Ahab want what they should not have.

**Feminism and the 'Reclaiming' of Jezebel**

It is important to give a brief history of feminism, in the context of feminist biblical scholarship, in order to gain an understanding of the study of Jezebel. In the last two centuries, biblical feminists have attempted to 'reclaim' women like Jezebel, whom they felt had been perverted, sexualised and grossly misinterpreted. Mary Anne Tolbert states that:

> Feminism, like other liberation movements, attempts a critique of oppressive structures of society. Feminism can be regarded to be concerned with the ascendency of women, whilst others understand feminism to be primarily a movement toward human equality in which oppressed and oppressors are finally reconciled in a renewed humanity.489

Furthermore, Tolbert goes on to argue that:

> Other biblical feminist readings attempt to highlight the social and religious power of women which has been ignored, overlooked, or hidden by patriarchal hermeneutics.490

486 Pippin 1994, 197.
487 Neroni 2005, 22.
488 Neroni 2005, 22.
490 Tolbert 1983, 119.
The majority of women's roles within the Bible, with few exceptions, were minor or stereotypical,\textsuperscript{491} as portrayed by the Deuteronomistic Historians. But Jezebel was not destined to be one of these women. She stands in contrast to such depictions, and she does so as an individual, not only as a member of a group of 'bad girls'. Jezebel was also associated by many 20th-century feminist scholars with how the Phoenicians were perceived as the 'other'. These feminists were rebelling against the Bible, which they claimed was a patriarchal scripture forever displacing women who were outside the Israelite 'norm', and consigning them to unsavoury roles.\textsuperscript{492}

It was in the 19th and 20th centuries that Jezebel and the 'bad girls' of the Bible rematerialised. Substantial bodies of scholarship relating to Jezebel were produced, but with a feminist slant. Feminist readings of the Bible began in the late 19th century, when some women began to question the religious scriptures, labelling many of them masculine and chauvinistic, written by males for males. One of the earliest feminist writers, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), in her book \textit{A Vindication of the Rights of Woman} (1790) had opened the door to feminist scholarship and implored her readers to see that women were human beings (and had a right to vote) before they were sexual beings, and that the mind itself has no gender.\textsuperscript{493} Furthermore, she felt society was squandering its assets if it retained women in the role of convenient domestic slaves and 'alluring mistresses', denying them economic independence and making them docile and attentive to their looks to the exclusion of all else.\textsuperscript{494} However, Wollstonecraft's views on religion were somewhat conservative, as she believed that women should learn not theology but religious dogma, which would

\textsuperscript{491} Such as being a vessel for children, cleaning, cooking, sewing.
\textsuperscript{492} Some other feminist writers on Jezebel include Athalya Brenner (2005); Tina Pippin (1994, 196–206); Heather McKay (1996, 32–61); and Janet Gaines (1999).
\textsuperscript{493} Wollstonecraft 2008, xiii.
\textsuperscript{494} Wollstonecraft 2008, xiii.
keep them in line and suspend their 'fervour'. Nevertheless, she had started a revolution—one which would continue for the next few centuries, ever gaining momentum.

The continuation of these feminist ideas saw the likes of Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) a famous American feminist and political activist, elaborate on the concept of a woman's right to vote. Her agenda also came to include African-American women and men. One of the things that made Stanton unusual in her time was her views on religion—chiefly organised Christianity—which she considered relegated women to a deplorable position within society. Stanton stated, "The chief cause of woman's oppression was the 'perversion of her spiritual nature', and her enslavement to a misogynist religion." 495 It must be noted here that these early feminist scholars were atypical of the social order of their time. Firstly, they were exploring areas that were 'off limits' for most women (that is, out of the household sphere), as scholarship was a male orientated field; and secondly, these exceptional women as scholars were considered almost on equal footing with their male contemporaries.

To counter the sexism some women confronted within the scriptures, The Woman's Bible (1895) was produced by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a panel of women. 496 It was monumental and in its unique way, redeemed the 'bad girls' of the Bible. These so-called bad girls were acclaimed and honoured as strong women and the idolatrous Jezebel was described as "a brave fearless woman, so wholly devoted to her own husband that even wrong seemed justifiable to her, if she could therefore make him

495 Parsons 2002, 98.
496 Stanton 1993.
happy (in that respect she seems to have entirely fulfilled the Southern Methodists' ideal of the good wife absorbed in her husband).

Yet one must be careful when reading biblical feminist writers such as Stanton, who, like many feminist scholars, chose 'select' information to support her cause, yet did not confront the fact that Jezebel murdered someone in cold blood (although technically not by her own hand; she just gave the orders). Stanton's central aim was to elucidate the fact that Jezebel, as a woman and a pagan, suffered negative bias and criticism from the male authors of the Bible and this besmirched her name throughout the course of history.

The first wave of feminist scholarship emerged from feminist political movements in the 1960s and concerned itself primarily with establishing women's studies in the academy and combating andocentric bias in history by locating and documenting women within the historical record. This method entailed a feminist revision of history, achieved by re-reading historical accounts for any information that could be gleaned regarding the lives of women, since traditional history had focussed on the accomplishments of men. Bird states that "modern feminist critique of the Bible as male-centred and male-dominated has elicited widely differing historiographical and hermeneutical responses, ranging from denial of the fact or intent of female subordination to rejection of the authority of the Scriptures as fundamentally and irredeemably sexist."

Second-wave feminism emerged in the late 1970s, and as Zaninab Bahrani explains, was heralded by an interest in matters going beyond the revision of the silence.

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497 Stanton 1993, 75.
500 Bird 1987, 398.
regarding women in the historical record to considering broader issues of gender construction. Furthermore, second-wave feminists criticised the first wave for failing to recognise the deeply systematic problem of gender subordination, and thus they sought to find the cause of the subordinate status of the female gender.

The second wave also saw the rise of the goddess religion—the 'reclaiming' of the prehistoric matriarch from ancient societies—and emphasised the underrepresentation of the spiritual desires of women. Jewish and Christian women were attempting to acquire equal responsibilities of worship with men. The second-wave feminists believed that religions such as Christianity and Judaism oppressed women and did not nurture their souls, leaving them feeling inadequate and unfulfilled. The solution was seen as a revival and adaptation of pagan goddess worship (Neo-Paganism), and an undertaking for it to be acknowledged in the category of mainstream religions. Neo-Paganism is a heterogeneous mixture of new and old ideas, yet it nevertheless presents women with an avenue for communication with nature and their inner selves which has previously been blocked by monotheism, with the Bible as the chief suppressor of women. The term 'paganism', well before feminists embraced and adopted it, was often misused within the study of religion due to the numerous subsidiaries of the practice. The focus here is on the religion of the pagan goddesses of the ancient Near East.

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503 This is arguable, but goes beyond the scope of this thesis.
504 Goldenberg 1979, 71.
505 Hume 1994, 6.
The very basic idea of the goddess was adapted from the Upper Palaeolithic era (30,000 BP). In the Gravettian epoch of the Upper Palaeolithic, 25,000 BCE to 20,000 BCE, the first manifestations of anthropomorphic art appeared. It was almost exclusively women who were represented and the artworks were coined 'Venus' figurines in the mid-nineteenth century by Marquis de Vibraye.

These Venus figurines have been excavated in quantities around the ancient Near East and over all the continents of the world. Because of the frequency with which they occur, many scholars have used the figurines as solid evidence that in earlier times the goddess ruled all. Archaeologist and feminist Marija Gimbutas took this concept to the extreme, skipping over pivotal facts and picking and choosing relevant information, which is what often occurs when people are driven to validate their point. Gimbutas has substantial amounts of evidence, yet lacks a clear methodology for interpreting it, arriving at the unlikely assumption that "[the Goddess] was the

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506 Such as the Venus figurines and rock paintings; however, Lynn Meskell has written a critique, with the conclusion that there is no clear evidence that the "Venus" figurines represented goddesses. See Nakamura and Meskell 2009, 211–212; see also Meskell 1995 for the full argument.
507 Markale 1999, 51.
508 Beck 2000, 203.
absolute ruler of human, animal, and plant life and the controller of lunar cycles and seasons. As giver of all, she is one Goddess in spite of the multiplicity of forms in which she manifests herself.”

Feminist analysis has also been considered a legitimate way to counteract the sexism towards women within the Bible. Feminist biblical scholar Catherine Quick writes, "Crucial to a recovery project is an understanding of how a text by or about women worked in its historical setting and in its reception through the subsequent ages of interpretation to uphold patriarchal assumptions about the feminine." Elisabeth Fiorenza, a prominent feminist biblical scholar, states that "feminist analysis has… pointed out that biblical texts were not only recorded from an andocentric point of view but were also consciously or unconsciously interpreted by exegetes and preachers from a perspective of cultural dominance." Other prestigious biblical feminist scholars include Tikva Fyrmer-Kensky, Athalya Brenner and Naomi Goldenberg, all of whom have contended with and successfully argued this modern concept by employing archaeological research and in-depth analysis of ancient texts from other ancient Near Eastern cultures.

Third wave (post-) feminists emerging in the mid-1980s began to look for a wider framework within which to think about the complex processes that had previously been identified by some second-wave feminists. Bahrani states in relation to relying on previous models of analysis:

Third wave scholarship argued, not only [are they] not enough for understanding the complexity of gender relations, but also [tend] to perpetuate the binary structure of male/female hierarchies. Instead feminists began to problematise these

509 Gimbutas 1982, 151.
510 Quick 1993, 44.
511 Russell 1976, 40.
512 Bahrani 2001, 18.
structures into relations of power. Concepts such as oppression, patriarchy, sexuality, and identity as used by white, middle-class feminists came to be increasingly challenged by a new feminist intersection with cultural theory and postmodernism, and especially poststructuralism and deconstruction.  

Furthermore, the start of this period also saw a turning away from investigating women in the historical record and calling attention to their oppression, toward a development of new methodologies and alternative ways of reading the historical or archaeological record; this was the case in regard to biblical feminist research. The third-wave feminists began an intense analysis of the entire Bible (not just the areas in which women appeared) from a feminist perspective. Carol Meyers, a feminist scholar of Near Eastern and Judaic studies (principally ancient Israelite pagan cult), observes that "the Bible, as a source, presents problems of omission in its treatment of women as individuals or as a group. Its androcentric bias and also its urban, elite orientation means that even the information it contains may be a distortion or misinterpretation of the lives of women removed from urban centres and bureaucratic families."  

These feminist scholars from all waves of feminism have endeavoured, with some success, to reclaim several of the shadowy female figures within the Bible, whose tales have often been told only partially or have been perverted.

Although the reclamation of Jezebel has been a partial success, it is difficult to discard old habits. Even now, after several centuries, the epithet 'Jezebel' is still applied to women who, it is believed, wear too much makeup, jewellery, or sexually provocative

515 Teubal 1990, xxix.
clothing. Society also still refers to a deceiving, cheating woman, prostitutes and tarts, as 'Jezebels'. A chapter in *The Phoenicians: The Purple Empire of the Ancient World*, is named 'The Tyrian Whore', evidence that even in present times Jezebel is still sometimes considered a 'bad' woman. Furthermore, it is interesting to point out that in Revelation 17:40, the writer, John of Patmos, also condemns a 'fictional' Phoenician woman who "was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries" (Revelation 17:40). Even Phoenician clothing and adornment was to Israel 'abominable' and 'full of sin'. Interestingly enough, although condemned by the Israelites, this 'purple' clothing was considered in most ancient Near Eastern countries the colour of royalty and wealth, and thus was in high demand as a luxury commodity.

**The 'Historical Imagination'**

The use of 'Historical Imagination'—a mixture of factual and fictional information—has become increasingly popular with feminist writers, as it encourages the reader to identify with the character—in this case, Jezebel—in an attempt to convey an understanding of her actions. Much akin to the ever-popular Dan Brown novels, writer (not scholar) Lesley Hazleton uses factual information including dates, historical geography and biblical references, blended with fiction. She reclaims Jezebel by means of compelling the reader to sympathise with her plight. Hazelton states that Jezebel "was three times evil; her problem—she was a powerful woman, a

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516 However, this is more from the older generation; see Bellis 1994, 164.
517 Bach 1997, 1.
518 Herm 1975, 102–123.
519 Purple dye was first developed in the Mediterranean and the Aegean, long before the Phoenicians began creating it, but the most expensive and good quality dye came from Tyre. See Stieglitz 1994, 49.
foreigner, and a polytheist.” Hazleton encourages the reader to feel empathy with this woman, who because of her birth and disposition was castigated by Israelite society and forever made the outsider, yet, by divesting her femaleness but not her homeland or religion, utilised a male persona to become protector of the throne and the leader of a country.

However, there are two sides to every story and both need to be analysed to find a middle road. As observed, throughout the last two millennia, the biblical fathers used Jezebel's name as an analogy for the sins of the flesh, prostitution and immorality. The biblical feminist scholars even today face tough competition from fundamentalists and everyday followers of biblical religion. Ultra-fundamentalists adhere to the medieval concept that Jezebel was a whore, who usurped authority that was not hers to take and whose worship of Baal undermined the Bible in its entirety. Via the action of venerating Baal and his pantheon, they claim, Jezebel condoned child sacrifice, perverted heterosexual relationships and endorsed homosexual activities. Thus, her death was a deterrent to all practising or advocating religious adultery, or transgressing the stereotypical subordinate female sphere and entering that of the male. "Jezebel was a murderously pagan and tyrannical queen, and the wife of Ahab. If she had been an Israelite, her determination and audacity in upholding her beliefs would have made her a heroine.”

Now that the analysis of Jezebel's environment and condemnation by the Israelites is complete, her death, which is considered one of the most violent within the Bible, can

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520 Hazleton 2007, 146.  
521 Hazleton 2007, 147.  
522 Sampson 2003, 11.  
523 Sampson 2003, 12.  
be assessed. The dilemma of her death in scholarship is that there are two main theories, both of which are completely out-dated yet proving increasingly difficult to expunge from history. There are two other possible theories which have been formulated through this thesis. They could prove to be viable lines of future enquiry, as will be briefly discussed below.

Theories on the Death of Jezebel

The Hebrew Bible reveals:

"And Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard, and she put (black kohl) cosmetic on her eyes, together with pleasing attire on her head, and looked out the window" (2 Kings 9:30). Before Jezebel even glimpsed Jehu, she made the decision to adorn herself. Why do the Biblical authors feel they even need to state this? Perhaps it was to illustrate that she intended to seduce Jehu, but from the narration, Jezebel being a seductress was already an established fact. So why state it? It is possible that the biblical authors were wanting to make a point: Jezebel yet again violated a taboo very important to Israel and all of the ancient Near East—in this case, the taboo of mourning.

As space does not allow here a full discussion of this vast and important topic, only a few points will be made. Firstly, the civilisations of the ancient Near East (in tradition and also in mythology) shared the same physical aspects of mourning. For men this

525 My own translation, with reference to Brown, Driver and Briggs (2005).
526 Mourning was not only customary for a death of a loved one/important person, but was also used to show regret, depression, or as an apology/humbling oneself.
encompassed shaving hair and beards off; for women, sometimes shaving or tearing out their hair, or placing ash and dirt through it. Both sexes gave themselves bodily mutilations such as gashes and cuts, rent their clothes, often replacing them with sackcloth, removed their shoes and went about barefoot, and mixed ash and dung and placed it on their heads and body. They fasted and ate the bread of mourning (Ezekiel 24:17), all the while wailing, lamenting and weeping. There are many references to these mourning practices within texts (especially mythological stories) from around the ancient Near East. The Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh, for example, describes how when the hero's beloved friend Enkidu passes, Gilgamesh tears his hair, rends his clothes and laments the death (Tablet 8, Lines 84–94).

In a text found on a stele in Hurran (modern Turkey), the mother of Nabonidus, the last king of the Neo-Babylonian empire, wrote her autobiography. After her death, in a postscript, the author mentioned mourning practices: "For the mourning and [...] they made a great lament, scattered [dust] on their heads. For seven days and seven nights they walked about, heads hung low, [dust strewn], stripped of their attire." In the famous Inanna's/Ishtar's Descent to the Netherworld, the goddess travels to the Netherworld, after being murdered by her sister, only to be revived with the aid of two sexless mourners and forced to find a replacement for herself. She selects her husband Damuzi/Tammuz, who had failed to mourn for her, and when he is sent to the underworld for half of every year (his sister offered herself for the other half), the

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527 Pham (1999) compiled various texts to produce an interesting overview in regard to mourning in the ancient Near East, but his main focus was on the Hebrew Bible.
528 Pritchard 1969, 562; see also Pham 1999, 33.
529 Pritchard 1969, 562
people of the land mourn his death. The mourning of Tammuz/Adonis is a good example of a practice that was a seasonal ritual (except in Aphaca, Phoenicia where it ran throughout the entire year) across the ancient Near East. Tammuz/Adonis also appears in ancient Egyptian literature, and is mentioned within the Bible, albeit in negative terms (Ezekiel 8:14). He also appears in Phoenician contexts and scholar/traveller Colin Thubron noted that the temple of Aphaca was consecrated permanently to the mourning goddess Venus (when she had lost Adonis). Images of the goddess in this context depict her with head bowed and veiled, hands hidden under her robes and her countenance sad.

Israel engaged in the same mourning practices. References are generously scattered throughout the Bible, but only a handful will be used here as examples. Similar physical aspects to mourning in Israel can be seen in the Book of Esther: "With fasting and lamenting… most of [the Jews] lay in sackcloth and ashes" (Esther 4:3). The Book of Amos within Chapter 8 describes God divulging to Amos that the end is near for his faithless people and threatening to turn their feasts into mourning and their songs into lamentation. Furthermore, God says He then will "bring sackcloth on all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day" (8:10).

In connection with Israelite myths, there is a Greek apocryphal story about Joseph and his Egyptian wife Asenath, previously mentioned in Chapter Four, who for the love

530 Inanna, after subjecting her husband to the Netherworld, completely regretted her actions, which is a typical Inanna characteristic—to act "in the heat of passion." Black et al. (2008) have translated this epic and many others on the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature project website [http://wwwetcsl.orient.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr141.htm]
531 Sellers 2003, 140.
533 An apocryphal expansion of the Genesis account of Joseph.
of Joseph, converted to his religion. Being introduced to Joseph, she fell deeply in
love with him, but he considered her a 'strange woman' due to her religion and would
not kiss her cheek. Bitterly heartbroken and ashamed, Asenath went through a series
of mourning practices: "[she] put on a sad raiment, such as she wore at the death of
her brother, and went clothed in a garment of heaviness...all the royal meat she gave
to the dogs; she put dust upon her head, lay upon the ground, and lamented bitterly for
seven days."534 Mourning in the Bible appears to span either seven days or 30 days.
Genesis 50:10 states that Joseph observed a seven-day mourning period for his father,
but the death of Moses (Genesis 34:8), as he was such an important person, saw him
mourned for a full month; this period is also evidenced in Deuteronomy 21:13,
regarding female captives mourning their fathers and mothers for a full month. Esther
9:22 also validates one month of mourning for the Israelite people, and Daniel 10:2
mourned three weeks for his people, who were sinning against God.

Now the practices have been very briefly confirmed by a few selected sources, we
come to the subject of Jezebel. When Elijah prophesied the death of the entire male
Omride dynasty (1 Kings 21:21), Ahab—not Jezebel—performed the mourning
custom of humbling himself before God, thus showing remorse for his actions: "When
Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his bare flesh; he
fasted, lay in the sackcloth, and went about dejectedly" (1 Kings 21:27). Jezebel
would have known exactly what Ahab was trying to achieve, and she deliberately did
not participate in this custom herself. It is clear that Jezebel felt there was no need to
participate, and from information previously gleaned from the Bible, she had no belief

or respect for the Hebrew God, or his prophets. Once Ahab himself died, it might be assumed that Jezebel, who had murdered for the love of him, would be mourning his death, although more research would be needed to determine how long family members, not just the community, would take to mourn a loved one. Justice is served in the eyes of the biblical authors when Jehu murders Joram (her second son) by piercing his heart with an arrow, then orders the body to be dumped on Naboth's land, the very land Jezebel murdered Naboth for. However, it is known that after the death of Jezebel's son and king of Israel, Joram (2 Kings 9:24), Jehu rode to Jezreel.

Perhaps Jezebel heard of his coming, took off her mourning clothes and adorned herself for the showdown, and the biblical authors were indicating that even while mourning her husband, she shunned pivotal customs. Jezebel knew she was to be assassinated along with her family and to have Jehu see her mourning would be to have her enemy encounter her at her weakest.

In ancient Israelite, Mesopotamian and Egyptian sources, applying eye makeup (kohl) and brushing one's hair are often associated with flirting. Several biblical passages attest to this, such as Jeremiah 4:30 ("You enlarge your eyes with paint"), Ezekiel 23:40 ("For them you bathed yourself, painted your eyes, and decked yourself with ornaments"), and Proverbs 6:24–26 ("Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes"). These are examples of the behaviour of 'bad' women who paint their eyes and bat their eyelashes to lure men to

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535 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 5. [http://prophetess.ltc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
536 Roughly 60–70 km away.
In the Egyptian myth of the Tale of the Two Brothers (Bata and Anubis), Anubis is out of the house on business and Bata returns home to obtain more seed, only to see Anubis' wife braiding her hair, which was considered sexual and also flirtatious. She then attempts to seduce Bata, only to be rejected. Hair is important in many ancient Near Eastern countries; firstly, because it is the first thing a man sees of a woman; and secondly, because clothes adorn the body, thus hair adorns the head. Adorning/attiring the head is seen as employing feminine 'seductive' power, and this is one reason why the ancient biblical scholars may have interpreted Jezebel's adorning herself as a seduction tactic for Jehu.

By adorning herself and looking out the window, as stated within the previous chapter, Jezebel became linked concurrently with several motifs of the ancient Near East, such as the prostitute/woman in the window, the sorceress, idol worship, and goddesses, and this would not have been lost on the Deuteronomists' audience. In addition to the reference to the 'woman in the window' plaques, by placing Jezebel up in a window, Gaines comments, the Deuteronomistic Historian is conjuring up images of other disfavoured biblical women and comparing her to them. Within the Bible, Sisera's (unnamed) mother looks out the window for her son's return (not knowing he is already dead) in Judges 5:28, and Michal, King David's wife, looks through a window and despises her husband's dancing and leaping around like a fool over the return of the Ark (2 Samuel 6:16).

537 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 6. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
538 Circa 1190 BCE.; see Hollis (2008, 2).
540 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 7. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
541 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 6. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
Scholars from as far back as medieval times singled out this theme of Jezebel's adornment and defiance towards Jehu and sexualised it; thus Jezebel's mighty confrontation was reduced to an attempted seduction. This is the main theory of the scholars of biblical tradition, many of whom are passionate fundamentalists, and it has come to eclipse several of the older commentaries.542

The Seduction of Jehu

The sexualisation of Jezebel and her supposed seduction of Jehu is a theme that must be discounted once and for all. Firstly, in Chapter Three above it has been shown that Jezebel treasured her husband enough to murder for him, breaking one of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13), creating false witness, and disregarding the ancient land tenure system held from Yahweh, all with the objective of acquiring the garden of Naboth for him. The repercussions of her actions are described within the Bible, culminating in Elijah threatening to bring down the house of Omri. Jezebel in turn, after the death of her prophets, issues a threat to eliminate Elijah, which sends him sprinting from Israel, with his tail between his legs. So the main line of reasoning is, why would Jezebel attempt to seduce Elijah's partner in crime? As previous chapters demonstrate, although the state itself was monotheistic, archaeological evidence verifies the prolificacy of pagan/household cults. Elijah the monotheist had accused Jezebel, stout advocate of Baalism, of being a whore, a sorceress and, furthermore, the main convertor of all Israel to polytheism, consequently turning their hearts away from Yahweh.

542 Oden 2008, 185; see also Sampson 2003, 41; Sweeney 2007, 335.
Additionally, Jehu (and his army) had murdered both her sons and had come to murder her as well. If she were attempting to seduce Jehu she would not have taunted him through the window by saying "Is it peace, you Zimri, murderer of your master?" (2 Kings 9:31). Jezebel's sarcastic, sharp-tongued insult of Jehu disproves any interpretation that she was dressed in her finest in order to seduce him. Her statement is a direct reference to the fifth king of Israel, Zimri. Zimri was king Elah's chariot commander, who plotted against the king and murdered him in a coup for the crown. To prevent any threats to his new position, Zimri also eliminated the entire male side of the former king's dynasty: "He did not spare a single male, whether relative or friend" (1 Kings 16:11). The Israelites uncovered the truth and proclaimed Omri (Ahab's father) king instead. Zimri, who had reigned for a total of seven days, committed suicide by fire. By taunting Jehu with the name 'Zimri', Jezebel had overtly stated that he was the leader of a coup and a murderer. He had massacred her family (bar Athaliah)—certainly not what could be called a great seduction tactic—but because of her adorning herself, it has been perceived for centuries as her dressing up to 'catch Jehu's eye,' and to further sexualise her 'feminine wiles'.

Many scholars, feminist and fundamentalist alike, claim that Jezebel adorned herself because she wanted to 'go out in style', or 'with a bang'. This is a very valid point, but it comes across as rather shallow; surely there must be more to her actions than the vain aim of 'looking good to meet her maker'. This is where a second hypothesis comes to the foreground. It could be theorised that Jezebel wasn't simply adorning

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543 Also translated "Is all well?"

544 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 7. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].

545 Jehu after the death of Jezebel also imitated this tactic, murdering Ahab's male kin.

herself to 'look good' or 'seduce Jehu', but perhaps was ritually adorning herself before
death, as she knew she wasn't going to walk away from the altercation, and perhaps
thought after Jehu's coup, no family would be there to adorn her body in death. Such
ritual adornment before death could possibly be connected with Inanna's
Descent to the Netherworld, as when the goddess made the decision to descend to the
Netherworld, she adorned herself for protection—not for sexualisation. Carey Walsh
briefly touches upon this notion when she states, "The beautifying... was apparently
done for Jezebel herself as she readied for death...she stood in full command of her
power..." Could there possibly be a link to an adornment ritual on the basis of
which the Deuteronomistic authors felt another lesson needed to be imparted, that if
you did adorn yourself, death would be imminent. It must be remembered here, as
mentioned at the start of this chapter, the biblical authors' thoughts and feelings on
adornment, especially in regards to Jezebel's homeland, were sexist, disapproving and
damaging—and this unfortunately permeated throughout history.

The Death of Jezebel

Returning to the story, after Jezebel has taunted Jehu, he asks aloud, "Who is on my
side? Who?" (2 Kings 9:32) Suddenly, the reader is made aware that two or three
eunuchs who are in Jezebel's room (and have remained out of the scene entirely until
now) look down. Jehu demands that they "Throw her down!", which they do—an act
of gross disloyalty and betrayal of Jezebel. Some of her blood splatters the wall and
the horses as they trample her underfoot (2 Kings 9:33). Jezebel's ejection from the
window represents an eternal demotion from her proper place as one of the Bible's

547 Her only daughter, Athaliah would have been in the Southern Kingdom of Judah.
548 Walsh 2013, 326.
most influential women. Jezebel, the bane of the Deuteronomistic Historians is dead. But it does not end there. Whilst celebrating after his conquest, Jehu's conscience must have bothered him: "Take care of that cursed woman," he says, "and bury her, for she was a king's daughter" (2 Kings 9:34). Jezebel is not remembered as a queen or even as the wife of an Israelite king; she is only the daughter of a foreign despot—another attempt by the Deuteronomists to marginalise her character.

Other written texts from around the ancient Near East make it quite clear that denying the deceased proper burial was considered a disgrace, promoted intense fear, and was often seen as a sign of divine judgement. As Jeremiah once warned the inhabitants of Judah, "Both high and low will die in this land. They will not be buried or mourned, and no one will cut themselves or shave their head for the dead" (Jeremiah 16:6). What is somewhat poignant here is that the only reason Jezebel obtained a burial was not that she was a Queen/Queen Mother of Israel, but that she was a king's daughter; that in itself was perhaps a political move to appease Phoenicia, as the lack of a burial for a member of their royal house could initiate hostilities. The denial of burial was—and still is—a most serious matter. In the ancient world it was reserved for the perpetrators of only the most atrocious crimes, such as witchcraft, murder, or, in the Middle Assyrian Law codes, abortion.

Even in the fifth century BCE, the denial of burial was still considered a most serious issue. In Sophocles' tragedy Antigone, the eponymous heroine, offspring of the

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549 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 7. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
550 Gaines 2013, 1 June, 7. [http://prophetess.lstc.edu/~rklein/Documents/how_bad_was_jezebel.htm].
551 King and Stager 2001, 363.
553 §53: "If a woman aborts her own unborn child, and she has been charged and convicted, she is to be impaled and not buried. If she died during the abortion, she is (still) to be impaled and not buried. If some woman hid her when had the abortion, and did not report it to the king..." See Greengus 2011, 145.
incestuous coupling of Oedipus and his mother Jocasta, attempts to secure a proper burial for her brother, Polynices. Polynices, who was viewed as a traitor to Thebes by its king, Creon, had been left on the battlefield to rot and be devoured by wild animals. Antigone's other brother, Eteocles (the brothers had killed each other in battle), was buried in the traditional fashion, and she was very deeply committed to achieving the same for Polynices. Creon, upon hearing of her plans, created a new law forbidding Antigone or any other person to bury Polynices, yet she ignored his command and was caught in the act. Antigone defiantly admits to ignoring the king's law, explaining that the more important 'divine law' that both creates man and ends his life demands a proper burial. A furious Creon as punishment has Antigone buried alive, and upon hearing of her fate, her fiancé Haimon, Creon's own son, in his grief commits suicide. The play ends in Creon's madness. Although a play, Antigone is a fitting example of how passionate the Greeks were in regards to the requirement of their loved one's burials.

Jezebel's horrific death can be seen as the final destruction of all things the Deuteronomistic Historians feared and loathed: a foreigner; a murderer; a thief; an idolater; a violator of divine Israelite law; a 'sorceress'; a liar; a 'whore'; and, finally, an exceptionally powerful woman with royal blood, raised to rule. Her death was meant as an example of the dangers of marrying the 'other', 'strange' woman, which was to be avoided at all costs, lest one's immortal soul be put in jeopardy.

It can be observed through the investigation of Jezebel and her life that several issues concerning her adornment and sexuality are proving very difficult to negate, yet

several alternative theories are, even now, still being formulated and examined. What can surely be agreed upon by both fundamentalists and feminists is that Jezebel, if she did exist, was a complex and multifaceted character, who is constantly being reformed, reclaimed and renounced in films, scholarship and religious and feminist agenda.
Conclusion

To navigate a 'Middle Road' for Jezebel scholarship will always be complex. The single artefact we have—the seal of Jezebel, discovered in a private collection—lacks provenance, and therefore cannot be considered solid evidence for the existence of the Israelite queen. The Bible, our one primary textual source, unfortunately cannot be taken as fact, not least because of the preconceptions in regard to women its authors brought to their work. These attitudes are best illustrated by the biblical law codes, which placed more restrictions on women than other contemporary codes from around the ancient Near East.

If Jezebel did indeed exist and was exactly as the Deuteronomistic Historians depicted her, then she was a powerful woman: a princess of Phoenicia, a pagan and a priestess of Baal who refused to be converted to monotheism. She was the 'other', an outsider by the Deuteronomistic Historians' standards (which, it can be argued, were xenophobic, sexist and fearful), a Phoenician—worse, a Phoenician woman—and therefore part of a culture which participated in sexual cults, sacrificed children by fire to its gods, and whose people were adorned and dressed for sin. Furthermore, Jezebel persuaded her good Israelite husband to convert to Baalism, much to the disgust of the biblical authors, though it bears reminding here that archaeological evidence verifies that polytheism was the cultural norm throughout the ancient world, and although monotheism did exist, it was considered unique to Israel.

The resonating 'wicked' character that was Jezebel evolved throughout millennia until feminists turned the once 'bad girl' into a woman to emulate and celebrate. They saw her as intelligent, capable (she was literate, and thus able to write the death sentence
for Naboth; 1 Kings 21:8), and especially powerful, as she competed with Israel's personal Yahwist prophet, Elijah, and sent him running out of the country in fear of his life. Furthermore, she was remarkably loyal to her husband and her religion. At no point within One and Two Kings did Jezebel ever deviate from her pagan religion—not even in death, which may be seen as truly admirable. Jezebel demonstrated a degree of influence normally associated with kings rather than Israelite Queens, arguably based on her Phoenician upbringing, and in so doing undermined many presuppositions of the Bible. In the grander scheme of the ancient Near East, powerful royal women were not considered the norm, yet there were several examples of women transgressing their typical cultural roles to aid either husbands or children in ruling/defending their countries in times of crisis.

We must not, however, forget about the negative aspects of Jezebel. She coveted and then stole land for her husband's pleasure, she bore false witness, and finally, she murdered in cold blood. Jezebel also threatened Elijah with death and killed many of Yahweh's prophets—not by her own hand, but she gave the order. Jezebel, throughout history, became intrinsically linked with prostitutes and the 'other', the 'strange' woman. While never a prostitute in the sexual sense, Jezebel was accused of religious whoredoms. In regard to Jezebel being classed as the 'other' and a 'strange' woman, this was due to her Phoenician foreignness, and the biblical authors' xenophobia and moral panic, which led them to assert within the Bible that foreign women were seductresses who would lead Israelite men astray—both sexually and religiously.

The final scenes of Jezebel's life, as presented in 2 Kings 9:30–37, have led to her often being accused of adorning herself in an attempt to seduce her husband's and
sons' murderer. But there is no evidence that Jezebel planned a seduction, especially given that she had once killed for the love of her husband. Feminists make the different claim that Jezebel wanted to 'go out in style', as she knew her death was imminent. Looking at the wider context for the scene, as discussed throughout this thesis, two new theories can be postulated here: firstly, either Jezebel was ritually adorning herself for death—much like the Sumerian/Akkadian goddess Inanna/Ishtar did—or otherwise, secondly, the biblical authors were making a point: that once again Jezebel was shunning important customs, in this case related to mourning, to confront her soon to be murderer, Jehu.

If Jezebel never existed—and we may never know the truth—she was a carefully crafted creation of the biblical authors, the protagonist in a story with the moral of avoiding religious idolatry, intermarriage, and the temptation of the 'other', 'strange', 'sexually provocative', 'sinful' and 'pagan' woman. In addition, if Jezebel was merely a figment of the biblical authors' imagination, she was also a convenient scapegoat, a fitting object of blame for how the entire Israelite kingdom struggled between polytheism and loyalty to Yahweh.

Jezebel in name and body has been tormented throughout history and it has been a most difficult challenge to emancipate her. Although feminists have made positive attempts (some successful) to reclaim Jezebel from the murky depths of the biblical authors' writings, it appears negative attitudes about her are solidly entrenched in some cultures. What bears repeating here is the concept of the 'middle' road: yes, Jezebel was a powerful, educated, religious (if, sadly, the wrong religion in the eyes of the Israelites), and loyal woman, but she also murdered, stole and challenged the
Israelite religion, causing a commotion which would be reflected in the writings of the Deuteronomistic Historians. Jezebel was, and remains, a fascinating woman, who defies the several categories to which both fundamentalists and feminists have attempted to consign her.

At present within the field of Jezebel scholarship, we only have one, unreliable, historical source, in the form of the Bible, which identifies Jezebel by name. Casting the net wider here, to include archaeological evidence, ancient law codes, and accounts of other leading women and their roles in the Near East, has raised intriguing possibilities for determining who this powerful woman known as Jezebel really was, by taking the middle road between the two extremes of a liberated feminist icon or sexualised epitome of evil.
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Figure 4: Kurkh Monolith

Figure 5: Possible Seal of Jezebel?

Figure 6: Code of Hammurabi Stele

Figure 7: Nen-Kheft-Ka and Wife Nefer-shemes

Figure 8: Rehotep and Wife Nofret

Figure 9: Painting of Jezebel
Figure 10: Ancient Trading Routes of the Phoenicians and Greeks
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Figure 12: Cylinder Seal Depicting the Sacred Tree and the Gods
http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/327659

Figure 13: Phoenician Ivory Sphinx in the Egyptian Style
http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/me/i/winged_sphinx_ivory_plaque.aspx

Figure 14: Phoenician Ivory Depicting Sacred Tree (Egyptian Style)
Source Memory 2011, 10 July. *Phoenician Ivory Depicting the Sacred Tree in the Egyptian Art Style.*

Figure 15: Phoenician Ivory Sphinx in the Egyptian Style
The Israel Museum 2014, 10 November. *Phoenician Ivory Sphinx in the Egyptian Style.*
http://www.imj.org.il/imagine/galleries/viewItemE.asp?case=3&itemNum=365181

Figure 16: Panel with a Male Figure Grasping a Tree; Winged Sun Disc Above
The Met Museum 2014, 6 November. *Panel with a Male Figure Grasping a Tree; Winged Sun Disc Above.*
http://www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/324926

Figure 17: Mount Carmel
Bible Walks 2015, 10 March. *Mount Carmel.*
http://www.bibleplaces.com/mtcarmel.htm

Figure 18: Painting of Elijah's Prophecy of the Omri Dynasty
Figure 19: Painting of Child Murderer Athaliah

Figure 20: Map of Samaria

Figure 21: Map Phoenicia and Their Commodities

Figure 22: Gold Plaque of Fertility Goddess Asherah

Figure 23: The Goddess Astarte Pottery Relief c. 1400 BCE

Figure 24: Astarte or Asherah on Gold Pendant—Sketch
Esoteric Theological Seminary 2008, 15 September. *Astarte or Asherah on Gold Pendant* (Sketch). http://www.northernway.org/presentations/godwife/73.html

Figure 25: Astarte/Asherah Holding Breasts Plaque

Figure 26: Israelite Cult Stand with Musicians from Ashdod
ARC Vertuel 2014, 8 November. *Israelite Cult Stand with Musicians (Ashdod)*. http://www.arcvertuel.org/?q=node/342

Figure 27: Bronze Bull Statue Dotham (edited)

Figure 28: Ta'anach Cult Stand
Figure 29: Bottom Register of Ta'anach Cult Stand

Figure 30: Grayscale Drawing of Ta'anach Cult Stand

Figure 31: Cultic Figures, Talismans etc. Excavated in Israel

Figure 32: Woman in the Window Ivory Plaque

Figure 33: Woman in the Window Ivory Plaque

Figure 34: Woman in the Window Ivory Plaque

Figure 35: Woman in the Window Plaque

Figure 36: Ishtar Votive Offering Houses

Figure 37: Ishtar Incense Burner from Assur

Figure 38: Ishtar Votive Offering Houses
Figure 39: Bes Figurine/Amulet Late Iron Age
Lessing Images 2014, 9 November. Bes Figurine/Amulet (Late Iron Age).

Figure 40: Protection Figurines/Amulets from Gath
http://gath.wordpress.com/2006/08/13/egyptian-gods-at-safi/

Figure 41: Movie Poster of the 'Sins of Jezebel' (1953)

Figure 42: Selection of Ancient Near Eastern Venus Figurines
SCRIPTURE INDEX

Old Testament/Hebrew Bible

Genesis

3:16  68
11    90
12:1–9 64
16:1–4 13
16:4    114
16:8    114
16:9    114
18    84
19    84
24:1–67 89
31    100
31:19  100
34:8    146
38:8    107
50:10  146

Exodus

7:8–13  70
8:22    70
20:3–6  84
20:13   149
20:22   70
23:32   89
34:11–16 89
34:16   90

Leviticus

7:6    101
20:27  109
21    101
21:7   104
25:23  75
26:30  95

Numbers

30:6–10   74
36:6–7    74
36:7–9 Table 26

Deuteronomy

5:6–21  77
7:1–4   89
7:5    70
12:2    95

12:3    70
16:21   70
18:10  79, 109
21:13  146
22:21   26
22:22   26
22:23–24 26
22:29   26
23:17  100, 104
23:17–18 101
25:5–10  107
33:29   95

Joshua

1–12  64
24:2   88

Judges

4:11  46
4:21   46
5:28  148
10:6   69
18    100

Ruth

1–4    64

1 Samuel

27:3    90
28    110
28:7   79

2 Samuel

6:16  148

1 Kings

1:11–31 117
1:19    114
2:19    117
5:6    59
5:8    59
6     59
9     62
10:18  59
13:2   84
15:13  114, 116
16:11  150
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:13</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:3</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:20</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:13</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:7</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:14–20</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24:12</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Chronicles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:13</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Chronicles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:17</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:16</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33:6</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:11–12</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nehemiah</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:7</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:26</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:12</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:17</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:13</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:3</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:2</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:22</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45:8</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45:10</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123:2</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proverbs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:24–26</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:4</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:22</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30:23</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Kings

1:11–12 81
5:3 114
8:27 115
9  Table 23, 79
9:10–11 79
9:22 79, 80, 116
9:24 147
9:30–34 xi
9:30–37 156
9:30 iv, x, 103, 143
9:31 150
9:32 151
9:33–36 xiii
9:33 116, 151
9:34 152
10:1 63

1 Chronicles

8: 62
10:13 110

2 Chronicles

9:17 59
15:16 114
33 110
33:6 79

Ezra

9:11–12 90

Nehemiah

9:7 88
13:26 90

Esther

1:12 52
1:15 53
1:17 53
3:13 53
4:3 145
5:2 53
8:10
9:22 146

Psalms

45:8 59
45:10 90
123:2 114

Proverbs

2 120
5 120
6:24–26 147
12:4 76
18:22 76
30:23 114
| 31 | 76, 109 |
| 31:10–31 | 25, 91 |
| 31:12 | 91 |
| 31:15 | 91 |
| 31:20 | 91 |
| 31:25 | 91 |
| 31:30 | 91 |

| Isaiah |
| 3:16–17 | 121 |
| 3:18–23 | 121 |
| 8:19 | 110 |
| 23:17 | 84 |
| 24:2 | 114 |
| 45:5 | 114 |
| 45:7 | 114 |
| 57:5 | 69 |

| Jeremiah |
| 4:30 | 119, 147 |
| 7:18 | 99 |
| 13:18 | 114 |
| 16:6 | 152 |
| 16:16 | 119 |
| 22:26 | 117 |
| 29:2 | 114 |
| 32:35 | 84 |

| Ezekiel |
| 8:14 | 98, 145 |
| 13:18–23 | 110 |
| 16 | 120 |
| 16:16 | 120 |
| 16:17 | 120 |
| 16:21 | 69 |
| 23 | 101 |
| 23:40 | 119, 147 |
| 24:17 | 144 |
| 26 | 84 |
| 28 | 84 |
| 27:12–13 | 57 |

| Daniel |
| 10:2 | 146 |

| Hosea |
| 1:2 | 120 |
| 2:13 | 120 |
| 3:4 | 100 |

| 4:12–13 | 80, 106 |
| 4:14 | 100, 120 |

| Amos |
| 3:15 | 59 |
| 6:4 | 59 |
| 8 | 145 |
| 8:10 | 145 |

| Nahum |
| 3:4 | 101 |
| 3:4–7 | 33 |

| 1 Maccabees |
| 1:15 | 90 |

| New Testament |
| Mark |
| 6:25 | 127 |

| The Acts |
| 17:11 | 101 |

| 1 Corinthians |
| 14:34 |

| 1 Timothy |
| 2:9 | 120 |

| Titus |
| 2:5 | 26 |

| 1 Peter |
| 3:3–5 | 120 |

| Revelation |
| 2:20 | 123 |
| 2:22 | 120, 123 |
| 2:23 | 123 |
| 17:40 | 141 |

| Galatians |
| Galatians 5:16–21 |
Appendix A

Early Writers of Virtuous Women

One of the most useful documents for assessing early portrayals of virtuous women is the *Anonymous Tractatus De Mulieribus*, which was compiled no earlier than the end of the second century or the beginning of the first century BCE. Many of the women it profiles were also mentioned briefly in *The Histories* of Herodotus (485–425 BCE), in which the author's *Researches* are set down to preserve the memory of the past by putting on record the astonishing achievements both of his own people (the Greeks) and of other peoples, and more particularly, to demonstrate how various groups came into conflict. In contrast, the *Tractatus de Mulieribus* is simply a series of short notices of 14 outstanding women, Greek and other, who had performed some notable deed and were outstanding for their bravery and intelligence rather than their looks. Deborah Gera is of the opinion that "the women described in DM [De Mulieribus] are somehow strange and paradoxical figures, paraded before us so that we can gape and stare, rather than appreciate their unusual qualities...[They] are all seemingly historical personages: there are no goddesses and no mythological figures in the work." Furthermore, all these women are queens and achieved their position through birth or marriage, which is the only way a woman could become a ruler in her own right.

Plato (c. 428–348) proposes in his work, *The Republic* that women are capable of bravery, just like men, mentioning in book five that "there is no special faculty of

555 Gera 1997, 30.
556 Herodotus 1972, 41.
557 Gera 1997, 3, 56.
558 Semiramis, daughter of a Syrian goddess, is a borderline mythical figure; she is a 'heroine', i.e. a female version of the half divine, half-mortal heroes. See Gera 1997, 4–11.
administration in a state which a woman has because she is a woman, or which a man has by virtue of his sex, but the gifts of nature are alike diffused in both; all the pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also, but in all of them a woman is inferior to a man...Men and women alike possess the qualities which make a guardian; they differ only in their comparative strength or weakness." Therefore, if a woman has the temperament of a male guardian she is to become one, and if a male has a gift of music, he is to become a musician; thus, an unheard of exchange of roles occurs.

Other authors who focussed on outstanding and virtuous women include Plutarch (c. 46–120 CE), in his catalogue *Mulierum Virtutes* (The Bravery of Women), where he declares, "I do not hold the same opinion as Thucydides. For he declares that the best woman is she about whom there is the least talk among persons outside regarding either censure or commendation, feeling that the name of the good woman, like her person, ought to be shut up indoors and never go out. But to my mind Gorgias appears to display better taste in advising that not the form but the fame of a woman should be known to many."  

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561 See Plutarch 1931.
562 Plutarch 1931, 217 f. In regard to Gorgias, he was a most famous rhetorician, a Greek from Sicily who was in Athens c. 427 BCE as an ambassador of his city. He is also portrayed by Plato in *The Republic.*
Appendix B

A Lament Over Tyre

1 The word of the Lord came to me:

2 Son of man, take up a lament concerning Tyre.

3 Say to Tyre, situated at the gateway to the sea, merchant of peoples on many coasts,
This is what the Sovereign Lord says: You say, Tyre, I am perfect in beauty.

4 Your domain was on the high seas; your builders brought your beauty to perfection.

5 They made all your timbers of juniper from Senir; they took a cedar from Lebanon
to make a mast for you.

6 Of oaks from Bashan they made your oars; of cypress wood from the coasts of
Cyprus they made your deck, adorned with ivory.

7 Fine embroidered linen from Egypt was your sail and served as your banner; your
awnings were of blue and purple from the coasts of Elishah.

8 Men of Sidon and Arvad were your oarsmen; your skilled men, Tyre, were aboard as
your sailors.

9 Veteran craftsmen of Byblos were on board as shipwrights to caulk your seams. All
the ships of the sea and their sailor came alongside to trade for your wares.

10 Men of Persia, Lydia and Put served as soldiers in your army. They hung their
shields and helmets on your walls, bringing you splendor.

11 Men of Arvad and Helek guarded your walls on every side; men of Gammad were
in your towers. They hung their shields around your walls; they brought your beauty
to perfection.

12 Tarshish did business with you because of your great wealth of goods; they
exchanged silver, iron, tin and lead for your merchandise.

13 Greece, Tubal and Meshek did business with you; they traded human beings and
articles of bronze for your wares.

14 Men of Beth Togarmah exchanged chariot horses, cavalry horses and mules for
your merchandise.

15 The men of Rhodes traded with you, and many coastlands were your customers;
they paid you with ivory tusks and ebony.

16 Aram did business with you because of your many products; they exchanged
turquoise, purple fabric, embroidered work, fine linen, coral and rubies for your
merchandise.
17 Judah and Israel traded with you; they exchanged wheat from Minnith and confections, honey, olive oil and balm for your wares.

18 Damascus did business with you because of your many products and great wealth of goods. They offered wine from Helbon, wool from Zahar and casks of wine from Izal in exchange for your wares: wrought iron, cassia and calamus.

19 Dedan traded in saddle blankets with you.

20 Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were your customers; they did business with you in lambs, rams and goats.

21 The merchants of Sheba and Raamah traded with you; for your merchandise they exchanged the finest of all kinds of spices and precious stones, and gold.

22 Harran, Kanneh and Eden and merchants of Sheba, Ashur and Kilmad traded with you.

24 In your marketplace they traded with you beautiful garments, blue fabric, embroidered work and multicolored rugs with cords twisted and tightly knotted.

—Ezekiel 27(1–24)