

# **BAD ROMANCE: HOW THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE CULTS OF YAHWEH AND ASHERAH SHAPED JEWISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOMEN**

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The cults of Asherah and Yahweh were two of the most important religious institutions of the Pre-Exilic period of Israelite history in Canaan despite their differing attitudes towards the value of goddess worship and patriarchy. Using biblical narratives that focus on the character of Yahweh as father/ king or Asherah as mother/queen as well as whore/consort, I examine how the conflict between their worshippers helped construct images of women in the ancient world and shape attitudes towards women in general. In the Hebrew Bible, for instance, idolatry becomes equated with adultery in the story of the Gentile Jezebel, while Gentile women such as Ruth are praised for leaving their former deities for Yahweh. Additionally, the interactions between kings and their corresponding queen mothers reveal feminine power as revered by goddess-worshipping Solomon, but seen as a threat to the Yahwist reformer Asa.