

# Section 9 – Patriarchal Monotheism

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## Resurrection

Resurrection, that core philosophy of Goddess worship, is less important in Judaism; some Jews believe in it, and others do not. It is not a mandatory belief, nor is it central.<sup>1</sup> It confirms the persistence of an immortal human soul, which will be raised from the dead and clothed once again the flesh of a human body. Resurrection in this sense has a very long history. The Natufians buried their dead and then dug up the skulls and sculpted portraits onto them and Inanna, having died and her corpse rotted, was born again in a new body, out of herself. The concept of resurrection represents a cyclical comprehension of life and as such is intrinsic, indeed, quintessential, to the understanding of the Goddess as creatrix and re-creatix of all life.

As part of their determination to excise all deities but one, the Jahwists had written out the Goddess, leaving only Jahweh and his reward of a material redemption: the Promised Land. This left a hard and cold comfort and, down the centuries, repeated efforts have been made to reintroduce aspects of the Goddess to the belief. In the Medieval period, the Kabbalists, doubtless at least to some extent influenced by the powerful Goddess-cult of Marianist Christianity that surrounded them, re-introduced the Goddess as the shekinah, the breath or fire of Jahweh. Even in the Biblical era, the idea of resurrection, that core element of Goddess-culture, had been adopted by the Pharisees, one of the principal politico-religious groups in Judea and Galilee. It is interesting, in this context, to note that Jesus has an association with Nicodemus the Pharisee, since Jesus was a preacher of Goddess philosophy and of Resurrection.<sup>2,3</sup>

We should not imagine that Judaism was any more homogeneous in the Biblical period than any major religious cult then or since, and the dichotomy between the Pharisees, who believed in Resurrection, and the Sadducees, who did not, is one clear confirmation of this.<sup>4</sup> We should, therefore, see surviving Hebrew Scripture as representing only one version – albeit the dominant one – of the religion of the Judahites. It may well be that many other versions were current but were simply never written down or were lost or destroyed.

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<sup>1</sup> Since so much of Judaism is concerned with how one lives, it is possible to consider oneself both Jewish and atheist. This again sets it apart from many other religions.

<sup>2</sup> John 3, 7, 19.

<sup>3</sup> John Dominic Crossan argues that James the Just was Jesus' older brother or half-brother. He may also have been a Pharisee. (Crossan, John Dominic. *A Revolutionary Biography*. HarperCollins. 1995.)

<sup>4</sup> There were four recognised politico-religious groups active in Judah, later Judea. These were the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Essenes and the Zealots. The former were the establishment parties and the two latter outside it.

Although Babylon had long since become a patriarchal society, its roots were in the Goddess-culture of Sumer. At the time of the Exile, it was still polytheistic, and representations of the Goddess were everywhere. In particular, Ishtar, who was the direct descendent of Inanna, had become the principal military deity of the Babylonians. She was the standard of the very army that had swept the Hebrews into decades-long exile. It would be surprising if the Hebrew scribes had not excised from their own scriptures every favourable reference to the Goddess they could find.

Just because the educated elite believed a certain set of ideas and tried to promulgate them, does not mean there were no opposing points of view. Women, in particular, must have resisted the suppression of the Goddess, and the rural poor, especially those who had been left behind in Judah during the Babylonian Exile, must have retained other, older beliefs and practices that were not modified by exposure to far-off Babylon. However, history is not only written by the winners, but by the literate. At the end of the Exile, when the Hebrew elite returned to Judah, those who had remained behind were looked down upon by the former exiles as heretics who worshipped a false version of Hebrew Scripture.

Raphael Patai and, more recently, Francesca Stavrakopoulou and others, confirm that in the earliest versions of the Judahite religion, Jahweh/ El did indeed have a female consort, Asherah.<sup>5</sup> It is also clear from the many references to it in the Biblical texts, usually surrounded by sulphurous fulminations, that the worship of Ba'al and his consort, Astarte, remained widespread, especially in the rural areas.

Astarte is the sister-wife of Ba'al. In Hebrew Scripture, Astarte is referred to as 'Ashteroth', but the suffix 'oth' is pejorative, and the name means 'the abomination Astarte'. This is in line with what we would expect of the followers of one politico-religious camp struggling against another. It supports the premise that Judahite culture was by no means monolithic, but full of contradictory beliefs.

As consorts of El and Ba'al, Asherah and Astarte are the representations of the female principle, the matron goddesses of women, the goddesses of love and sex, and the Mother. Most of all they represent Resurrection through the love and forgiveness of the Goddess. They are the antithesis to the Jahweh of the patriarchal scribes and clerics. Their message is that rebirth comes from the Goddess, that hope for another chance at life, therefore, comes from her too, and that the reward for a good life is release from the clammy gloom of the Underworld to be reborn.

The writers of Hebrew Scripture wrote out the ideas of rebirth and instead saw hope in materialistic terms.

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<sup>5</sup> Patai, 1990.