

Worksheet 3 - Final

Monday, February 23, 2026

5:48 PM

The Forgotten Half of Heaven: Recovering the Heavenly Mother Tradition

Summary of the Lesson:

Before addressing the material in this unit, it is important we acknowledge how Cognitive Frame has played a role in the simplification of the Hebrew text. Through the patriarchy society, feminine language was edited out and only recently recognized as a core part of the original writing. Bayesian thinking is encouraged to recontextualize the Hebrew text.

The book of Enūma Eliš is edited and translated to remove original generous material presence. Enūma Eliš is villainized by oppositions that changed her reputation. Editors simplified the text by turning oppositions into a good verses evil narrative. Rather than Enūma Eliš being the mother who protects her children by refusing certain circumstances for their good, she is a mother who deprives her children to inflict harm.

Similarly, women's cultic roles within the temple are minimized and nearly erased. There are not only several forms of textual evidence, but evidence on archeological artifacts that supports that women worked in sacred jobs related to the temple. Some of these jobs were close enough to priesthood that certain women should have been qualified to be priestess themselves.

However, King Josiah rushed a radical theology reform that minimized religious authority, removed cultural and history documentation of a feminine divine and altered the text. Next unit will cover the repercussions of this reform movement.

Reflections:

If the maternal figure was erased everywhere else, and yet we still see traces of her presence in the Hebrew Bible, what does that tell us about the earliest layer of the tradition?

Key Terms (include a pronunciation guide):

Stephen Pinker's Cognitive Frame: the mind naturally compresses complex realities into moral binaries in order to feel safe.

Oppositions: Order and chaos, discipline and fluidity, masculine and Feminine are all structural polarities of ANE traditions

Bayesian thinking: updating a belief in light of new evidence.

Cultic: religious duties and logistical responsibilities, particular to the worship of Yahweh in the Old Testament

Significant Hebrew words and their meaning:

אַרָג ('arag): "to weave,"

בָּתִּים (batim): "houses"

קָנָה (qanah): "created" or "possessed,"

אֲרָגוֹת ('ōrgōt): "weaving"

בָּתִּים (batim): "houses" or the "thing" weaved is enigmatically

Graphic (working title):





Time line of Opposition in the Earliest Cosmologies

The Story:

Enūma Eliš: The story begins with uniting the fresh waters *Apsu* and the salt waters *Tiamat*. These waters oppose each other but by joining together, give way to life. They create children (who are the younger gods) and a world with no scarcity, suffering or death. In spite of their paradise, the younger gods are described as *lemnu*, which has a semantic range to include troublesome, disadvantageous, unstable, or not conducive to growth. The father *Apsu* sets his mind to punish their children. The mother *Tiamat* is much more protective of the children, but agrees to address their children's behavior. She suggests to put an obstacle the children must overcome in their way so that they are able to grow into their identities as gods.

The story changes its description of *Tiamat* from radiant and generous to vicious and weaponized. It is written she designs dangerous serpents who ambush the children. The young gods fight back and *Marduk*, a great hero, overcomes *Tiamat* by slicing her body in half. She is killed. The upper part of her body becomes the heavens and the lower becomes the netherworld. Her death brings about a sense of order and design.

Reflections:

Having read the myth and reviewed other evidence about the *Enūma Eliš* text, what are your thoughts about the mythology? (What do you think the truth story is based on the different perspectives dissected? What Hebrew words that were lost in translation stand out as the most significant to the nuances of this story?)

Graphic:

Zoroastrian & ANE Parallels – Comparative Patterns



Describing the pattern of consistent narrative:

generative origin of opposites → tension required for growth → sustainability only through sacrifice → ordered world for the burden of the gods.

There is a clear pattern of complex narratives slowly transforming from stories of tensions between two complex groups or individuals into stories of exact moral binaries of good versus evil.

Further reading: A Zoroastrian example

<https://www.sacred-texts.com/zor/sbe31/sbe31030.htm>

Graphic:





Ancient Near Eastern traditions: The generative mother is loving and compassionate. ->

Early Israelite (First Temple): Mother is present in text and seen as divine plurality working in companionship ->

Josianic Reforms: Maternal symbolism is restricted, reframed, or absorbed into abstract categories. the maternal figure is no longer a generative presence within the system but a theological problem to be managed. ->

Deuteronomic Monotheistic Compression: Centralization of worship to Jerusalem and theological reduction of the plurality of Heavenly Parents into exclusive Yahwistic language; maternal imagery is either absorbed into YHWH or suppressed as illegitimate. ->

Later Interpretive Moralization: Cosmic polarity is reinterpreted as ethical dualism; generative complexity becomes moralized as threat, and maternal symbolism is recast as adversarial, chaotic or cultic. ->

Reading:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian_mythology?wprov=sfti1

Evolution of the text redactional seams (Assignment):

<https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/9781575068619/html>

While reading this article pay close attention to how scholarship see the very clear roots to the Hebrew narratives but how they are incorporated are always in debate. As your interpretation will allow you to keep it reject certain aspects. Try and see what you agree with and what you reject with your current paradigm.

The Story:

Still present within the biblical text, women were said to “wove garments for the Asherah” within the temple precincts (2 Kings 23:7) point to an institutionalized cultic role. It was a significant role, that acknowledged presence of the divine, and was considered a holy act (the Akkadian term *dullu* refers to assigned sacred service, and weaving belonged to that category of cultic duty). Second Kings 23:7 records that Josiah “broke down the houses of the qedeshim... where the women wove hangings for the Asherah.”

Weaving symbolized cosmic order and divine embodiment. This was not an unimportant role or a role that anyone could be trusted with. The act of weaving carried cosmological resonance, reflecting the broader metaphor of creation as ordered fabric. Archaeologists have discovered female figures, cultic objects with recognized maternal divine presence and inscriptions reading “Yahweh and his Asherah.” All of these pieces suggest that divine feminine was recognized and celebrated as a relational counterpart in early Israelite religion.

The erasure of the history of these objects points to a major theological and political shift. Removing Asherah from the temple and burying her relevance to ritual reflect a movement toward centralized monolatry. Despite this, there is still textual evidence that confirms the divine feminine role within ancient culture.

Quote:

"Many readers will understandably wonder why they have never encountered this claim before, or why this framework

has not been shown in any of their traditional instructions. That question is fair. But as a linguist what I am trying to help them see is that for years now, linguistic scholarship has moved past certain assumptions about early Israelite religion and with new archaeological discoveries, epigraphic findings, and refined linguistic analysis the consensus has significantly reshaped the scholarly landscape. What is layered out below follows the careful presentation of linguistic and textual evidence from the latest scholars that has emerged from their academic work. Rather than asking you to accept a conclusion, this section invites you to examine the data itself. If the argument holds, it will do so because the language supports it." - Jared

Reflection: What are your thoughts on the evidence? What data seems the most significant to you? Are you finding any part of this unit that makes you feel relief? Does any of it make you feel slightly unsettled?

Text:

Exodus 35 (Hebrew)

וְכָל-אִשָּׁה חֲכַמַת-לֵב בְּיָדֶיהָ טָווּ
וַיָּבִיאוּ מָטָה אֶת-הַתְּכָלֶת וְאֶת-הָאַרְגָּמָן אֶת-תּוֹלַעַת הַשָּׁנִי וְאֶת-הַשֵּׁשׁ:

וְכָל-הַנָּשִׁים אֲשֶׁר נָשָׂא לֵבָן אֶתְנָהּ בְּחָכְמָה טָווּ אֶת-הָעֵדִים

Exodus 35 (English translation)

"All the women who were wise of heart spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun: the blue, the purple, the scarlet yarn, and the fine linen.

And all the women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom spun the goats' hair."

וָיוּ (tāwû) — "they spun"
" — חֲכַמַת-לֵב wise of heart"
" — מָטָה spun yarn/material"

2 Kings 23:7 (Hebrew)

וַיִּתֵּץ אֶת-בְּתֵי הַקִּדְשִׁים אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית יְהוָה
אֲשֶׁר הַנָּשִׁים אָרְגוּתָם שָׁם בְּתֵים לְאַשֵׁרָה

2 Kings 23:7 (English translation)

"He tore down the houses of the qedeshim that were in the house of YHWH, where the women were weaving houses for the Asherah."

אָרְגוּת (’orgôt) — Qal active participle, feminine plural, "(women) weaving"
בְּתִים (battīm) — "houses" (enigmatic object)
" — לְאַשֵׁרָה for the Asherah"
" — בְּבֵית יְהוָה in the house/temple of YHWH"

Reflection: Can you see/find the feminine influence in Hebrew text? What word or phrase stands out the most?

Graphics:

The following table isolates lexemes where women are the explicit subject/agent in overtly priestly narratives (tabernacle/temple). Verse-level morphology is given in standard grammatical terms; Hebrew forms and verse contexts follow the cited interlinear witnesses.^{3,4,5,6}

Lexeme (root; Strong's)	Hebrew form in verse	Morphology	Concordance (book-verse)	Immediate context (priestly frame)	Literal translation (tight)
טוה "spin" (H2901)	טוּוּ / טוּוּ	Qal perfect 3cp (common plural form used with a female subject)	Exod 35:25; Exod 35:26	Women contribute spun materials for the sanctuary (tabernacle project).	"they spun"
ארג "weave" (H707)	אֶרְגוּת	Qal active participle feminine plural	2 Kgs 23:7	Inside YHWH's temple precinct, women are "weaving" something for the Asherah during Josiah's reform purge.	"(the women) weaving"

Two additional tool terms often occur in "household industry" contexts (Prov 31) anchored in the Hebrew vocabulary for spinning equipment and matter for "women + textile work" linguistics:^{7,8,9,10,11}

Lexeme (Strong's)	Hebrew form	Morphology	Concordance	Context	Literal translation
כִּישוֹר "distaff / spinning staff" (H3601)	כִּישוֹר	Noun (with preposition)	Prov 31:19	Household textile labor (non-cultic).	"on/with the distaff"
פָּלָה "spindle/whorl; also district" (H6418)	פָּלָה	Noun	Prov 31:19	Household textile labor (non-cultic).	"spindle/whorl"

Global concordance for core "weaving" lexemes in the Hebrew Bible

Because priestly arguments often rest on *distribution* (where a lexeme appears and with what collocations), the table below lists every Hebrew Bible occurrence for the central "weave" root ארג (H707) and the closely related noun אָרָג (H708). The dataset is stable in major digital concordances and is explicitly enumerated in a BDB-backed lexicon entry with a Scripture index.^{12,13,14,15,16,17}

Root ארג (H707) — all occurrences and why they matter for cultic readings

Concordance	Hebrew form	Morphology	Context snapshot	Literal translation
Exod 28:32	אֶרְג	Qal active participle ms (as nomen agentis in construct phrase)	"work of a weaver" in priestly garment manufacture.	"weaver" / "(of) weaving"
Exod 35:35	וְאֶרְג	Qal active participle ms (substantive in craft list)	Specialist textile artisan listed among sanctuary craftsmen.	"and a weaver"
Exod 39:22	אֶרְג	Qal active participle ms	"woven work" for cultic garment (robe of ephod).	"weaver / woven"
Exod 39:27	אֶרְג	Qal active participle ms	"woven work" for priestly tunics.	"weaver / woven"
Judg 16:13	תֹּאדָרְגִי	Qal imperfect 2fs	Delilah: "if you weave..." (non-cultic narrative, but textile vocabulary).	"you weave"
1 Sam 17:7	אֶרְגִּים	Qal active participle mn (construct)	"like a weavers' beam" (simile).	"weavers (of)"

Scripture reference	Hebrew form	Morphology	Context snapshot	Literal translation
2 Sam 21:19	אֲרָגִים	Qal active participle mp (appears in name + simile)	“Jaare-oregim” + “weavers’ beam” (simile).	“weavers”
2 Kgs 23:7	אֲרָגוֹת	Qal active participle fp	“where the women were weaving...” in the temple; key cultic locus.	“(women) weaving”
1 Chr 11:23	אֲרָגִים	Qal active participle mp (construct)	“like a weavers’ beam” (simile).	“weavers (of)”
1 Chr 20:5	אֲרָגִים	Qal active participle mp (construct)	“like a weavers’ beam” (simile).	“weavers (of)”
Isa 19:9	אֲרָגִים	Qal active participle mp (substantive)	“weavers” in an Egypt-related economic oracle (linen trade imagery).	
Isa 38:12	כְּאֶרֶג	Qal active participle ms (with כֹּ “like”)	Mortality metaphor: “like a weaver I cut off my life.”	“like a weaver”
Isa 59:5	יִאֲרְגוּ	Qal imperfect 3mp	Metaphor: “they weave the spider’s web” (intrigue).	“they weave”

Noun אֲרָג (H708) — loom/shuttle vocabulary

BDB and modern concordance glosses treat אֲרָג as “loom” (and/or “weaver’s shuttle”) with occurrences in the Samson cycle and in Job’s “weaver” metaphor set.

Concordance	Hebrew form	Morphology	Context snapshot	Literal translation
Judg 16:14	אֲרָג	Noun ms	Loom-related terminology in the Samson/Delilah episode.	“loom / web”
Job 7:6	אֲרָג (BDB linkage)	Noun ms	“My days are swifter than a loom/shuttle” imagery.	“loom / shuttle”

Text:

The text specific describes female weaving labor with priestly-textile instructions. By default, those participating in this labor are thought to be participating in priest labor. This evidence is further proof for the argument that weaving labored women could share the title of priestess.

Evidence includes teaching women to:

- שָׁרַר: “to twist”, used in the priestly tabernacle texts to describe “fine twisted/twined linen.”
- רָקַם “to variegate/embroider”, a technical verb for colored/ornamental textile work used in tabernacle contexts and in later prophetic clothing imagery (e.g., Ezekiel’s “embroidered cloth” motif, though that motif often uses noun-derivatives as well).

Further reading:

Noegel’s peer-reviewed study

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Scott B. Noegel, “Women, Weaving, and the Asherah in 2 Kings 23:7,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 83 (2021): 1–26.
<https://faculty.washington.edu/snoegel/>

Reflection: What are your thoughts on female priestesses? How would you interpret the text to define how women participated in ritual and ceremony?

Sources:

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/h707/kjv/wlc/0-1/>
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