

How to Worship Our Mother in Heaven (Without Getting Excommunicated)

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A belief that, in addition to a Father in Heaven, we also have a Mother in Heaven is to my eye not one of those doctrines that one simply *must* accept in order to be a faithful, committed, temple-attending Mormon. One is perfectly free to disavow the idea if one so chooses. My impression, however, is that even today belief in a Mother in Heaven is by far the mainstream position of contemporary Mormons. Originating in the nineteenth century, the concept was upheld early in the twentieth century by the 1909 First Presidency Statement on the Origin of Man and was given recent support by “The Family: A Proclamation to the World” in 1995. The mainstream position on Her existence was perhaps best expressed by Gordon B. Hinckley: “Logic and reason would certainly suggest that if we have a Father in Heaven, we have a Mother in Heaven. That doctrine rests well with me.”¹

If most of us agree that a Mother in Heaven exists, then why has discussion of Her been so controversial, even resulting in disciplinary actions in a few cases? My perception is that people tend to see this matter in one of two very different ways. Those who are more liberal-minded and open to feminist thought see the concept of Mother in Heaven as a wonderful, revealed doctrine of the Prophet Joseph and are very frustrated that we do not actually *do* anything with that knowledge. Those who are more traditional and conservative (certainly the majority) may sympathize with that frustration, but they are also of the view that we simply do not know anything about Her beyond the mere fact of Her existence. People in this camp therefore tend to see those who strive to make the doctrine mean-

ingful in Church life as engaging in New Age syncretism in a misguided effort to fill the lacuna. As a moderate, I can see and empathize with both perspectives.

To borrow a rhetorical question posed by B. H. Roberts in the context of his Book of Mormon studies, “Is there any way to escape these difficulties?”² I believe there is. What I wish to propose is a middle, moderate path, a compromise of sorts. The scripturally based knowledge that I believe we can glean about our Mother in Heaven will surely be less than liberals might hope for—but it will also be more than nothing, which is the historic state of affairs. We can glean that knowledge only by applying the tools of scholarship, a method with which conservatives may not be entirely comfortable. But at least this knowledge derives in a certain way from our own canonized scriptural tradition.

In this essay, I shall begin by describing what we can learn about our Mother in Heaven from the scriptures.³ I then will draw from those descriptions some (very modest) suggestions for how we might actually worship, or at least honor, Her in ways that should not be considered offensive or heterodox by traditionalists. This essay is therefore a little exercise in religion-making. It is my hope that I will be able to express my mediating thoughts in a way that will not be deemed offensive by those of either school of thought on the subject.

My basic insight is this: We think that we have no knowledge about our Mother in Heaven because we assume that such knowledge must come from modern sources, our premise being that *of course* there is no knowledge about Her in the Bible itself. It would be nice if there were a clear and direct modern revelation, say a Doctrine and Covenants 139, articulating with clarity Her nature and attributes and how we are to worship Her. Needless to say, no such text exists. But what I am going to suggest is that knowledge of Her is available in our canonized scripture, particularly in the Old Testament. Although information about Her is preserved in the Old Testament and associated literature, it is hidden in such a way that it requires scholarship to excavate it. And Mormonism is one of the few traditions, if not the only one, that has the resources within itself to take advantage of this knowledge for contemporary religious purposes.

One place to begin our story is with the work of Boyd Kirkland on the development of the Mormon understanding of God.⁴ Kirkland argued that the current Mormon convention of equating God the Father with Elohim and God the Son with Jehovah (Yahweh), derived from the

1916 First Presidency Statement drafted by James E. Talmage, matches neither biblical nor nineteenth-century Mormon sources. This conclusion is in general true canonically (i.e., for the biblical text as redacted in its final form), and for a long time I assumed the same thing across the board. I began to rethink this issue only when I was introduced to the work of the independent Methodist scholar, Margaret Barker,⁵ which in turn led me to a more recent trend in the scholarship of ancient Israel of seeing the monotheism we associate with Israelite theology as coming only at the end of a long line of development. Kirkland acknowledges such a development to a certain extent, but he sees it as a simple movement from an earlier stage of monolatry to extreme monotheism. The more recent trend in scholarship is to see the development as more profound, beginning with a polytheistic pantheon much like that of the Canaanites.⁶

According to this view, at first the Hebrews worshipped a small pantheon consisting of the high god El, his consort (scholar-speak for “wife”) Asherah, their sons Yahweh and Baal, and the other (less important and often unnamed) sons of the Gods. Just as the Mormon understanding of God developed over time (as Kirkland documents), this early pluralistic understanding of God also developed over time in the movement toward monotheism. Baal was a very similar deity to Yahweh and therefore was excluded from the pantheon very early to make way for Yahweh’s claims. El was more complementary to Yahweh in his characteristics, so he and Yahweh were simply merged into each other (resulting in the compound name Yahweh Elohim, rendered “the LORD God” in the King James Version). The other sons of the Gods became angels—still divine beings, but a lower class of being than the dominant Yahweh.⁷

The understanding of Asherah changed over time in response to these developments. At first She was the wife of El, the mother and procreator of the Gods. As El was merged into Yahweh (around the tenth century B.C.E.), Asherah came to be viewed as the consort, not of El, but of Yahweh. For instance, an inscription at Kuntillet ’Ajrud in the northern Sinai, fifty-five miles northwest of Eilat, dating to roughly the ninth to eighth centuries B.C.E., states: “I have blessed you by Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah” [*brkt ’tkm lyhwsh mrmn wl’shrth*].⁸ Eventually, the functions of Asherah were also absorbed into Yahweh’s; then, in an effort to put a stop to any independent worship of Her, reformers linked Her polemically to (the now thoroughly discredited) Baal, despite the fact that

such a linkage does not seem to have had any historical basis. This reform movement against the worship of Asherah took place from the eighth to the sixth centuries B.C.E.; and by the time of the conclusion of the Babylonian Exile, the worship of Asherah *as such* had been stamped out.

Although the formal worship of Asherah was eventually stopped, arguably Her memory did not cease to exist altogether; rather, it was kept alive under other names and guises. Her worship continued, but the understanding of Her was transformed over time in one of two broad ways. First, there was a tendency to associate her with some important human mother figure, such as Eve and, later, Mary, as human representations of the Hebrew Goddess. The other way in which She was transformed was to see her as a spiritualized agent or characteristic of Yahweh. Over time, as the Hebrews began to conceive of God less and less in anthropomorphic terms and more and more as an abstraction, the need for personified mediating entities between God and humans increased. These entities were originally conceived of as Yahweh's attributes or emanations (sometimes called *hypostases*), but they eventually developed into angel-like beings who act within the physical world and serve as intermediaries between God and humans. Examples are divine Wisdom (*chokmah*), God's Presence (*shekinah*), and God's Spirit (*ruach*).⁹

There is information about Asherah ready to be mined from the Old Testament text, but none of it is really clear or straightforward. The most direct references derive from the reform period and are therefore negative in nature. There are also a number of possible positive allusions to Asherah in the text that were only partially obliterated by scribal redaction over time. So while the evidence is limited and difficult to work with, Mormonism at least has the resources to be able to look past the canonical form of the text to the prior (positive) worship of Asherah. For one thing, we are not biblical inerrantists; it is well established in our tradition that many "plain and precious things" were removed from the text over time by redactional and scribal activity. Normally I find myself in the position of arguing against resorting to this principle as a crutch in the absence of any actual evidence for such textual and historical manipulation; but where, as here, there is actual evidence for such manipulation, our openness to this principle allows us to see and recognize it without being blinded by a commitment to the text in its final form. For another thing, our restorationist impulse means that we are very open to looking at the earliest form of a belief or worship practice, as opposed to being beholden to the

later, more evolved form. As Joseph expressed in his King Follett Discourse, he was interested in finding the *original* conception of God and then working forward from there, as opposed to trying to work backwards from the current conceptions:

In the first place I wish to go back to the beginning of creation. There is the starting point in order to know and be fully acquainted with the mind, purposes, decrees, and ordinations of the great Elohim that sits in the heavens. For us to take up beginning at the creation it is necessary for us to understand something of God Himself in the beginning. If we start right, it is very easy for us to go right all the time; but if we start wrong, we may go wrong, and it is a hard matter to get right.

Faithful LDS scholars have a strong motivation to take the recent non-LDS scholarship regarding Asherah as the Hebrew Goddess very seriously. If they have any interest in propping up the contemporary Mormon image of Elohim as a father deity and Jehovah as a separate son deity (and they do), then they must recognize that Asherah is an integral part of that scholarship. And given that the existence of such a Mother in Heaven figure was apparently taught by the Prophet Joseph, it is certainly in the interest of apologetically oriented LDS scholars like me to take this scholarship and Asherah herself with the utmost seriousness.

At this point I would like to briefly survey what the scriptures teach those with eyes to see and ears to hear about our Mother in Heaven. As I have already suggested, She is not nameless, but She had (and has) a name: *Asherah*. The word *'asherah* appears forty times in the Old Testament (see Appendix A), sometimes referring to the Goddess directly, but more often referring to Her cult object—apparently a wooden pole that represents a sacred tree (like the Tree of Life) which acts as an allusion to the Goddess herself. In the King James Version (KJV), the Hebrew word *'asherah* is always represented by the English word “grove,” following the mistranslations of the Greek Septuagint (*alsos*) and Latin Vulgate (*lucus, nemus*). Although when referring to a cult object *'asherah* may have occasionally been used to refer to a single living tree (but not necessarily a *grove* of trees), the word is sometimes modified in some way by such verbs as “make” (*'asa*), “build” (*bana*) and “erect” (*natsab*), indicating that it was a manmade object representing or symbolizing a tree, and not an actual living tree.

The difference between the KJV and the modern New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), may be illustrated by 2 Kings 23:4:

KJV

And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for **the grove** [*'asherah*], and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Bethel.

NRSV

The king commanded the high priest Hilkiah, the priests of the second order, and the guardians of the threshold, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels made for Baal, for **Asherah** [*'asherah*], and for all the host of heaven; he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.

Where the KJV incorrectly renders *'asherah* as “the grove,” the New Revised Standard Version correctly transliterates this word as the proper name “Asherah.” In this case, the reference is directly to the Goddess, as the term is singular and is part of a sequence with other deities: Baal and the Hosts of Heaven.

While some Old Testament passages like this one refer directly to the Goddess, more common are indirect allusions to Her by way of Her cult object, as in Deuteronomy 7:5:

KJV

But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their **groves** [*'asherim*], and burn their graven images with fire.

NRSV

But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their **sacred poles** [*'asherim*], and burn their idols with fire.

In this case, the plural form (with the masculine ending *-im*) is in parallel with “pillars” and “idols,” thus indicating that the reference is specifically to the cult object of the Goddess.

According to the Old Testament, those who advocated the worship of Asherah include the people during the period of the Judges (Judg. 3:7), Jeroboam I (1 Kgs. 14–15), Rehoboam (1 Kgs. 14:23), Asa’s mother Maacah (1 Kgs. 15:13), Ahab (1 Kgs. 16:32; cf. 1 Kgs. 18:19), Jehoahaz (2 Kgs. 13:6), those in the Northern Kingdom before its downfall in 722

B.C.E. (2 Kgs. 17:10, 16), and Manasseh (2 Kgs. 21:3, 7). Those who rejected such worship include Gideon (Judg. 6:25–30), Asa (1 Kgs. 15:13), Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18:4), and Josiah (2 Kgs. 23: 4, 6, 7, 14, 15).

The explicit references to Asherah in the Old Testament are all negative and reflect the polemical view of the reformers. We do not have explicit texts from the period before King Josiah's reforms articulating a positive view of Her worship. The sheer number of such negative references, however, coupled with archaeological findings, attests to the great popularity of her worship and the difficulty of totally suppressing it during the reform period. But there are also a handful of passages that, while not explicitly referring to Asherah, seem to reflect the prior positive view of her and her worship. I will briefly describe ten:¹¹

1. Genesis 1:26–27.

And God said,
let us make man in our image,
after our likeness:
and let them have dominion over [the animals].
So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God created he him;
male and female created he them.

The parallelism of the passage suggests that the image (*tselem*) of God was both male and female. The introductory formula with its plural forms appears to reflect a pantheon, and although the Priestly author who wrote the first chapter of Genesis would not have intended it, being profoundly monotheistic himself, he appears to have made use here of older material reflecting the original plural Hebrew conception of God. The implication of this passage is that men and women were created male and female in the image of God, which is also male and female.

2. Genesis 21:33. The KJV reads: "And Abraham planted a grove in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God." A more literal rendering might be: "And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of Yahweh El Olam." Note the combination of the divine names "Yahweh" and "El," together with Olam "Eternal [lit. (of) Eternity]," an epithet of El. The final form of the text as it has been preserved has no direct mention of Asherah, but it

seems likely that this planting of a sacred tree by the patriarch Abraham was an act to venerate Her.

3. Genesis 30:13. The KJV reads: "And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher." It has been suggested that what she really said was not "happy am I" [*be'oshri*, lit. "by (or with) my happiness"], but "by Asherah" or "with Asherah's help" [*be'asherah*], Asherah being a fertility goddess. The traditional way of taking this, "by/with my happiness," is very awkward. The name of the Goddess, Asherah, is very similar to the word for "happiness," so it would have been a simple matter for scribes to remove Asherah's name from the narrative by replacing it with the noun for "happiness." Invoking the name of a deity in childbirth was common, and the normal form of such an invocation is with the *b-* prefix (meaning "by") Leah uses here. Leah had similarly exclaimed "by Gad" or "with Gad's help" upon the birth of her son (through her handmaid Zilpah), whom she duly named "Gad." Gad was the god of luck worshipped in Phoenicia and Canaan. In this theory, the name of Leah's son Asher would simply be the masculine form (without the feminine *-ah* ending) of the Goddess's name.¹²

4. Genesis 49:25. Jacob's blessings to his sons includes an invocation to Yahweh (v. 18), followed by an invocation to El (v. 25) including the common El epithet Shaddai ("almighty") used in parallel with "El." This verse also bestows the blessings of Breasts-and-Womb, which was known as an epithet of Asherah.¹³

5. Proverbs 3:13-18. One form into which Asherah worship was transformed was as Lady Wisdom (Hebrew *chokmah*) in Proverbs 1-9. It has therefore been suggested¹⁴ that there is an intentional word play on the name of the Goddess in an *inclusio* we find in Proverbs 3:13-18. An *inclusio* is a type of distant parallelism between material at the beginning of a section of text and that at the end of the section, thus framing or bracketing the material in the middle. These six verses form a discrete block of text. In verse 13 is "happy" (a word that is very similar to "Asherah" in Hebrew) and "Wisdom" (the designation of the Goddess as She was transformed). Five verses later in verse 18 is the expression "a tree of life," a characteristic of Asherah paralleling the word "Wisdom" (v. 13) and a repetition of "happy" (v. 13). As the parallel elements are given in inverted order, this particular *inclusio* is chiasmic in nature:

- A. happy [v. 13; *'ashre*]
- B. Wisdom [v. 13; *chokmah*]
 [Framed material in verses 14 through 17]
- B. a tree of life [v. 18; *'ets chayyim*]
- A. happy [v. 18; *me'ushshar* (same root as *'ashre*)]

That “Wisdom” appears in parallel with “a tree of life,” long associated with Asherah as a sacred tree, tends to suggest the association of Wisdom with Asherah. The word play on the name Asherah in the Hebrew word “happy” tends to confirm that association.

6. Proverbs 8:22–31. Another illustration of the recasting of Asherah as personified Lady Wisdom is in this passage, quoted below from the NRSV:

The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
 the first of his acts of long ago.
 Ages ago I was set up,
 at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
 When there were no depths I was brought forth,
 when there were no springs abounding with water.
 Before the mountains had been shaped,
 before the hills, I was brought forth—
 when he had not yet made earth and fields,
 or the world’s first bits of soil.
 When he established the heavens, I was there,
 when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
 when he made firm the skies above,
 when he established the fountains of the deep,
 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
 so that the waters might not transgress his command,
 when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
 then I was beside him, like a master worker;
 and I was daily his delight,
 rejoicing before him always,
 rejoicing in his inhabited world
 and delighting in the human race.

7. Isaiah 6:13. The Revised Standard Version (RSV) of this passage

reads: “And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains standing when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump.” The reference to “a tenth” appears to be an allusion to Judah, the tribe which was not taken as part of the Assyrian conquest. This tenth would not entirely escape but would be punished also in the Babylonian captivity. Yet even then a righteous remnant would remain, from which Israel could once again grow and flower. Thus, the end of the verse reflects the concept, common in Isaiah prophecies, of a returning remnant. For example, Isaiah 7:3 states that Isaiah had a son symbolically named Shear-jashub (“A Remnant Shall Return”).

Although the general meaning of the passage seems clear enough, the text itself is obscure and has apparently been corrupted. Many scholars believe the relative particle *‘asher*, translated “whose” in the text above, was originally a reference to Asherah. These scholars would emend the end of the verse to read: “like the terebinth [of the Goddess] and the oak of Asherah, cast out with the pillar of the high places.” (Both the RSV annotation and the New English Bible do so.) That is, Judah would be cut off and burned the way a sacred tree or an Asherah pole was hewn down and burned during the reform period. These scholars would simply delete the obscure last sentence, “the holy seed is its stump,” and thereby remove the concept of the return of a righteous remnant from this verse.

If these scholars are correct in seeing here an allusion to Asherah, and if they are incorrect in deleting the last line, we have a plausible explanation for the corruption in the text. In this reading, the prophet was indeed using the cutting down of an Asherah pole or a sacred tree to illustrate Judah’s captivity by Babylon. He goes on, however, to argue that the stump of a sacred tree was still considered holy and could regenerate into a new tree. As a reform prophet, Isaiah would not have used this imagery to support Asherah worship; rather, he appears to have been using common Israelite beliefs about Asherah worship to make a point about the ultimate return of a righteous remnant of Israel. Later scribes, apparently offended that the prophet would have used Asherah worship to illustrate a positive prophecy of the return of Israel, even as a literary device, modified the text to avoid this association.

8. Hosea 14:8 [Hebrew 14:9]. This verse in the RSV reads: “O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress, from me comes your fruit.” The line rendered “It is I who answer and look after you” is a translation of the He-

brew *ani 'aniti wa'ashurennu* (the “you” of the RSV is literally “him” in the Hebrew, referring to Ephraim). The meaning of the line as it stands is obscure. Some scholars suggest here a conjectural emendation to *'ani 'anato wa'asherato*, meaning “I [Yahweh] am his Anat [another Canaanite goddess] and his Asherah,” which would then restore the parallelism of the first two half-lines in the verse. Even if one does not follow these scholars in emending the text, at the very least there seems to be a word play on the names “Anat” (possibly understood during the Israelite period as another name for Asherah) and “Asherah” in the Hebrew text as it exists. That there is such an allusion to Asherah here can be seen particularly in how Isaiah 27:9, which is based on this passage, makes explicit reference to *'asherim* “Asherah poles.” True, the prophet here is arguing against Asherah worship as part of the reform movement. But he does so gently, by having Yahweh assume Her attributes. Yahweh tells Ephraim that He (Yahweh) will fulfill the historic role of Anat/Asherah in the future for Israel. Yahweh is like a sacred tree (as is Asherah); the source of fertility is not Asherah, Goddess of fertility, but Yahweh Himself. While perhaps not a positive allusion to Asherah, this passage does illustrate how Yahweh co-opted Her functions during the reform period.¹⁵

9. Ezekiel 8:3. This passage reads: “and the spirit . . . brought me to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy [*sml hqn'h hmqnh*].” (See also v. 5.) This “image” is generally assumed to be a statue of Asherah present at one time in the temple. The expression “image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy” makes little sense. It has been suggested that the real designation of this figure was *sml hqnh*, “the image of the creatress,” consort to Yahweh, who is called “creator [*qnh*] of heaven and earth” in Genesis 14:19. If this suggestion is correct, then “image of jealousy,” *sml hqn'h*, is a word play used to avoid mentioning the (at that time) forbidden “image of the creatress.”¹⁶

10. 1 Nephi 11:8–23. In this passage the Spirit shows to Nephi the tree which his father had seen, beautiful and white beyond description. Nephi tells the Spirit: “I behold thou has shown unto me the tree which is precious above all.” The Spirit asks Nephi what he desires, and he responds that he wishes to know the interpretation of this tree that had been shown to his father and which he now beheld himself. Instead of straightforwardly answering his question, the angel shows Nephi a vision of a virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins, whom the angel

identifies as the mother of the Son of God. And then Nephi sees the virgin with a child in her arms, whom the angel identifies as “the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!” At this point, the Spirit asks Nephi the same question Nephi had previously asked him: “Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?” To the modern reader, the tree seems irrelevant to the vision of Mary, but Nephi replies that he now knows the meaning of the tree: “Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things,” to which the angel responds “Yea, and the most joyous to the soul.”

How did a vision of the virgin Mary and her child answer Nephi’s question about the meaning of the tree? To the modern reader, the connection seems utterly obscure. Why would the virgin be portrayed in some sense as a tree and the child as the fruit of the tree?

In what to my mind is surely one of the most remarkable articles ever published in Mormon studies, Daniel C. Peterson answers the question by pointing to the tree symbolism of Asherah, the divine mother figure of ancient Israel.¹⁷ What seems to us to be no connection at all was immediately apparent to Nephi once he beheld the virgin and her baby. Peterson’s article is not only a probing exegesis of the Book of Mormon passage but also a very able survey of recent Asherah scholarship from an LDS perspective.

What information about Asherah in Her specifically Hebrew context can we derive from the scriptural canon? At this point, I shall attempt to synthesize some scripturally based propositions about Her. Needless to say, these insights are but a few pieces from a much larger jigsaw puzzle (without the picture on the box); we can see Her through the scriptures only through a glass darkly. I shall also offer a few suggestions for how we might actually include Her within our worship.

The subtitle to this essay—“Without Getting Excommunicated”—suggests some basic parameters for my suggestions. First, no idolatry. At least part of the reason that the Deuteronomist reformers worked to suppress Her worship is that over time Her worship was corrupted by idolatrous practices, much like the Nehushtan or brass serpent-pole, which, although originally fashioned by Moses and entirely unobjectionable, eventually came to be worshipped idolatrously and was therefore destroyed. That is, it was the manner of worship and not the object itself that was objectionable. So I will not suggest pouring out drink offerings to

Asherah poles or any such observance. Second, no public prayer. Given that President Hinckley has forbidden public prayers addressed to Mother in Heaven,¹⁸ that instruction represents the current policy of the Church, although I suggest a partial, small exception below. And third, the practices I suggest are modest reconceptualizations of practices we already engage in, or practices that would be viewed as innocuous to an outside observer, or private practices meant for the home.

1. Name and titles. I personally regard it as very significant that we actually know the name of our Mother in Heaven: *Asherah*. In the ancient world, knowing the name or *etymon* of a god was very important, and just having this small bit of information helps us to personalize Her rather than leaving Her in the realm of unknown and distant abstraction.

What did “Asherah” mean? Here, as often in the Old Testament, we must distinguish between popular and historical etymology. It seems likely that Hebrew-speaking Israelites would have understood the name as meaning “Happiness, Blessedness,” from the verbal root *'ashar*, the basic meaning of which is “to go straight on, to advance,” whether in a literal or a metaphoric [“in the way of understanding”] sense. In the *piel* verb stem, the verb has the developed meanings “to set right, righten” and from there “to pronounce happy, call blessed.” In this view, “Asherah” would be a nominal form of this verb. Indeed, early modern Hebraists understood the word in just this way.¹⁹

Although I have focused on the small bits of information we can glean about Her from the Old Testament, a more extensive body of knowledge is available in the older Ras Shamra tablets, written in Ugaritic, a Canaanite dialect. The Ugaritic vocalization of “Asherah” was “Athirat,” which traditional scholarship interprets as deriving from the longer expression, *ʾrbt 'atrt ym* (“She Who Treads on the Sea.”) More recent scholarship prefers “Lady Athirat of the Sea,” thus keeping Her name intact. A more recent understanding of the historical linguistic etymology of “Athirat” (and thus Asherah) is that it means “Sanctuary.”²⁰ This interpretation is also supported by Her epithet *qds* (Ugaritic *Qudshu*, Hebrew *Qodesh*), meaning “Holy Place, Holiness.”

Although the epithet “Breasts-and-Womb” appears in the Old Testament (Gen. 49:25), Canaanite literature ascribes other epithets to her that are not in the Bible: “Lion Lady,” “Creatress of All the Gods,” and “Mistress of Sexual Rejoicing.” Early Israelite belief may have continuity with at least some of this earlier Canaanite mythology; but for purposes of

this paper, I want to focus specifically on what we can learn from our canonical scripture. I make, however, an exception for Her principal title: *Elat*. Although this title is attested only in Ugaritic and not in Hebrew, it fits logically with what we otherwise know about her. “Elat” is *El* with the archaic *-at* feminine ending. “El” appears in the Hebrew Bible, both as the proper name of the Most High God and as a generic term for God; although the normal Hebrew feminine ending is *-ah*, the archaic *-at* ending also appears in biblical Hebrew, apparently paralleling the feminine *nebi’ah*, which generically means “prophetess” but, as used specifically in Isaiah 8:3, means “Mrs. Prophet” (i.e., Isaiah’s wife). So the title “Elat” can mean both generically “Goddess” (in her own right) and specifically “Mrs. El” or “Mrs. God” (in relation to El Himself).

A small gesture of deference to our Mother might be to name a child in Her honor. It probably would not do to name a daughter something like Chokmah (just think of the therapy bills), but there are a couple of names that would work as honorifics of Her in our culture: *Asher* for a boy (the masculine form of Her name) and *Sophia* for a girl (Greek for Wisdom).

2. Creation. In Proverbs 8:30 quoted above, Lady Wisdom reports that She was present during the creation and assisted with it. In the NRSV, this passage reads: “then I was beside him, like a master worker.” The KJV mistranslates this verse as: “then I was by him, as one brought up with him” (meaning “like a child”). The key term in the Hebrew is *'amon*, meaning a master craftsman, artificer, or architect. Thus, this passage portrays Wisdom as a skilled craftsman working beside Yahweh in creating the world. This concept fits readily into Mormon thought, since we understand the creation not as the work of a single deity, but rather as the collaborative effort of a small pantheon working together.

This passage also has numerous parallels with the creation account from Genesis 1. How did the author of Proverbs conclude that Wisdom was present at the creation and assisted in its work? One possibility is KJV Genesis 1:2: “and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” Some translations interpret the Hebrew expression as “a mighty wind was blowing across the surface of the water.”²¹ The Prophet Joseph, however, suggested another version in Abraham 4:2: “and the Spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters.” This phrasing is not only part of our modern scriptural canon, but it likely also reflects academic knowledge Joseph gained from Professor Joshua Seixas in Hebrew classes at

Kirtland. The Hebrew word here is *merachepeth*, a participle from the verb *rachaph*, “to hover.” That verb appears in Deuteronomy 32:11, where a mother bird broods (or hatches out) her young. The Syriac cognate means “to brood over, to incubate.” When this concept is associated with the fact that the Spirit (*Ruach*) of God was perceived as a transformation of “Asherah” in later Hebrew thought, Genesis presents a mysterious feminine metaphor for part of the creation process. Possibly this association is what led the author of Proverbs to portray Wisdom as present and active in the creation.²²

3. Sacred trees. Asherah was most profoundly represented in the scriptures with various forms of tree symbolism, beginning in the Garden of Eden. Prominent in the garden is the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In Mormon theology, the Fall is actually necessary for human moral development. As is often expressed, the Fall and the Atonement were not Plan B, a band-aid to remedy a great mistake, but rather Plan A, intended all along. The Fall had both positive and negative effects. The Atonement remedies the negative effects, while the positive effects remain intact. Therefore, in Mormon thought, Eve is not the great scapegoat of all humanity, ruining our one chance at true happiness, but rather the moral heroine of the story, who by a flash of insight or intuition saw the necessity of partaking of the fruit. The fruit of this tree made human beings “wise” and, thus, was the source of wisdom. The story also mentions another sacred tree, the tree of life, from which Adam and Eve were separated after the Fall.²³

The fact that Abraham planted a tree in honor of Asherah (Gen. 21:33) acquires new significance in light of Asherah’s association with tree symbolism. As Peterson discussed in “Nephi and His Asherah,” we should expand the Asherah-tree symbolism to the Book of Mormon as well; think, for example, of the allegory of the olive tree or of Alma’s experiment comparing faith to the planting of a seed. Indeed, in the Mormon “liken-unto-us” *peshar* reading of Ezekiel 37, which we take as referring to “sticks” of Judah and Joseph representing the Bible and Book of Mormon, the key word in the passage is *ets*, which literally means “tree” (or “wood”). We therefore can view each volume of scripture as a tree, meaning a source of divine wisdom.

In addition to reading the scriptures with greater sensitivity to possible connections between tree symbolism and our Mother, how might we apply this knowledge in Her worship? First, I suggest that we recon-

ceptualize how we think of our Christmas trees. Just as Peterson demonstrated that the tree of Nephi's vision represented the mother of the Son of God, the babe being the fruit of the tree, so it seems a very natural extension of that idea to see the decorated trees erected in our homes each December as representing the Christ child's mother—hence, indirectly the Mother of us all. Since the practice of putting up Christmas trees originated from a pagan fertility symbol that had to be reconceptualized in the first place to give it a Christian meaning, giving the tree our own reconceptualization would not be treading on inviolable ground. And, of course, putting a Christmas tree up each December is entirely unobjectionable in our culture, a practice at which no one would bat an eye. But seeing the tree as a symbol of our Mother may be a source of satisfaction to those who long to acknowledge Her in some way.

A second possibility would be to take a page from the minor Jewish holiday (minor in the sense that there are no restrictions on working), Tu Bishvat.²⁴ The name "Tu Bishvat" refers to the fifteenth day of the month Shevat in the Jewish calendar (*bi-* is a preposition, and *tu* represents two Hebrew letters used to form the number 15 in lieu of Arabic numerals). Tu Bishvat originally was the last date in which fruit could be taxed that year. Fruit ripening after Tu Bishvat could be assessed for tithing only for the following year (and since Mormons also tithe, this is a regulation we can understand and relate to). But over time, this day has taken on greater significance. This holiday is one of the four Rosh Hashanahs ("New Years") mentioned in the Mishnah, the basis of the Talmud. Tu Bishvat is the Rosh HaShanah La'llanot "new year of the trees." Today it is celebrated as the birthday of the trees, with a symbolic eating of fruits and with active redemption of barren land by planting trees. People express their ecological concerns and their desire to reconnect themselves to nature. It has become a kind of Jewish Earth Day. Certainly a day when we were to plant trees (and extrapolating that specific action to a broader concern with protecting and nurturing this earth's environment), seems to me a very natural way to honor our Mother in Heaven.

4. Artistic representations. Although the Hebrew Bible itself has only hints about the worship of Asherah in ancient Israel, the archaeological record is much richer and is not burdened by the polemical perspective of the Josian and other reformers. William Dever's remarkable recent book, *Did God Have a Wife?*, is an excellent source of archaeological evi-

dence for ordinary Israelites' common worship of Asherah.²⁵ In antiquity there was a rich tradition of iconic representation of Asherah.

I have a modern copy of an ancient Asherah pillar base figurine²⁶ on the bookshelf in my living room. Such figurines were absolutely ubiquitous in ancient Israelite homes. Mine features a woman's head and breasts, but the bottom of the figure is shaped as a smooth cylinder, representing the trunk of a tree, the Goddess's symbol. She is not an idol to me; I do not worship it, and She sits next to French gargoyles, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic icons, an Etruscan charioteer, a statue of the Greek Goddess Hygeia (the goddess of health), and a Nauvoo sunstone. Mormons tend to be more pragmatic than, for instance, some very conservative Christians or Jehovah's Witnesses, about allowing such artistic representations of deity. Therefore, there is nothing inappropriate about having such a visual reminder in one's home. In addition, those who have artistic talents could make their own, modern representations of our Mother.

5. Fertility, childbirth, and lactation. It should come as no surprise that Asherah was originally a fertility goddess. Fertility, childbirth, and lactation were among the very gravest concerns of ancient women—literally matters of life, death, and familial survival. These issues remain crucial even in our own day, when infertile couples routinely spend thousands of dollars attempting to successfully have children of their own.

This is the one area where, to my own eye at least, private prayer to our Mother in Heaven might be countenanced. I personally have never prayed to Her under any circumstances and do not feel the need to do so. And certainly there is nothing wrong with praying in our normal fashion to God the Father in the name of Jesus Christ for help with these issues. But Yahweh absorbed what were originally Asherah's fertility functions and the scriptures preserve Leah's prayer to Her in successfully giving birth to one of the sons of Israel. If a couple or a prospective mother were to feel the need to address our Mother directly in prayer in this particular type of circumstance, I personally would not find it offensive. These are, of course, very private matters, and I am assuming that any such prayers would not become a matter of public knowledge. Consequently, such prayers should not adversely affect others who might not approve of such a prayer being offered in their presence.

Of course, President Hinckley's counsel on this subject did not expressly distinguish private from public prayers, and many people would

not be comfortable circumventing that direction. And I have no authority in the Church to suggest anything otherwise. So those who may wish to engage in such prayers will need to consider the matter carefully and take responsibility for their own actions. I am simply reporting that my own sensibilities would not be offended if a woman or couple, desperate to conceive, were to address their Mother in Heaven in their prayers.

6. Healing. Popular culture routinely portrays the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (and, by extension, the tree of life) in the Garden of Eden as an apple tree. But in Jewish tradition, the tree of life was most commonly an olive tree, which makes sense given that tree's important role in Middle Eastern culture.²⁷ I have long thought it significant that we give healing blessings using consecrated olive oil, which is the fruit of the tree of life, therefore most appropriate to the task, and at least in part a symbol of our Mother's nurturing concern for our health and well-being.²⁸

7. Happiness. Even though "happiness" was not the true etymology of the name "Asherah," Israelites doubtless understood the name to have that meaning. Therefore, there was a tendency to create word plays using "happiness" in situations associated with the Goddess. Sometimes "happiness" was substituted for her name to avoid mentioning Her at all. Therefore, passages in the Old Testament that refer to happiness should be read closely with these possibilities in mind, and, as Peterson rightly notes, the same sensitivity in reading *happiness* passages should also be extended to our reading of the Book of Mormon text. There may well be nuggets of information about the Goddess hidden in such passages awaiting discovery by a diligent reader.

8. Wisdom. Since Asherah was recharacterized as personified Wisdom, we should read passages referring to wisdom with an eye attuned to possible nuanced allusions to the Goddess. In particular, we should read with care the whole of the Wisdom Literature (in the Old Testament, this would include Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, and Ecclesiastes).

In the Jewish tradition, study is perceived as a kind of worship.²⁹ I have suggested some topics to look for in a fresh and close reading of scripture. Appendix B is a bibliography of non-LDS literature on Asherah as an Israelite Goddess. Though not exhaustive, it is sufficiently extensive to allow any diligent student to become acquainted with the most concrete information we have about how the ancients viewed Asherah and Her nature. Let no one complain about a lack of knowledge on this subject with-

out first rolling up her sleeves and digging into the many resources available that give us some genuine insight into our Mother in Heaven.

Just as the specific practice of planting trees to honor Asherah can be generalized to broader concern with the environment, we may also extrapolate from wisdom specifically to a broader concern for education and intellectual striving. Just as She would want us to protect this earth She helped to create, so, too, like any mother, She would desire for us to broaden our minds and learn the wonders of the universe to the extent we are able.

9. Temple service. I see the crowning way to worship our Mother in Heaven as engaging in temple service, whether as workers or as patrons. The connection between our Mother and the temple was and is profound. Consider, for instance, the following points:

- “Asherah” means “sanctuary,” “holy place,” and is thus, essentially, a synonym for temple.
- During times favorable to Asherah worship in ancient Israel, there was a statue or other image of Her prominently displayed in the temple. (This image was removed during times unfavorable to Her worship.)
- The menorah was a stylized almond tree and probably a symbol of the Goddess. It burned olive oil, which also was Her symbol.
- The two cherubim atop the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies were identified as Asherah and Yahweh.³⁰
- Our modern temple ritual revolves around a creation drama, in which Asherah participated as a master craftsman.
- The Garden of Eden narrative prominently features two sacred trees (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life), both of which represent Her.
- One of the most prominent ways that ancient Israelite women worshipped Asherah was by weaving textiles that were then used in the temple.³¹ It is not entirely clear what these weavings were—perhaps wall hangings or veils.

In 1985, I graduated from law school and moved to Chicago to begin my career. The Chicago Temple was dedicated not long after we arrived. Relief Society sisters in the area had made altar cloths with fine needlework for the temple’s altars. It seems to be a very close analog to a specific way in which Israelite women worshipped their Mother in Heaven.³²

In short, I can think of no finer, more profound way to worship our Mother in Heaven than to participate in temple worship. And I have

never known a bishop or stake president to excommunicate anyone for spending too much time serving in the temple.³³

Notes

1. Gordon B. Hinckley, "Daughters of God," *Ensign*, November 1991, 100. The 1909 statement reads: "... even as the infant son of an earthly father and mother is capable in due time of becoming a man, so the undeveloped offspring of celestial parentage is capable, by experience through ages and aeons, of evolving into a God." The 1995 statement reads: "Each is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents . . ." For the history of the idea in its Mormon context, see Linda R. Wilcox, "The Mormon Concept of a Mother in Heaven," in *Sisters in Spirit: Mormon Women in Historical and Cultural Perspective*, edited by Maureen Ursenbach Beecher and Lavina Fielding Anderson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 64–77.

2. George D. Smith, "'Is There Any Way to Escape These Difficulties?': The Book of Mormon Studies of B. H. Roberts," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 94–111.

3. My survey of scholarship on the ancient Hebrew pantheon is to some extent personal and subjective, as virtually all of the propositions I shall make can be and have been debated by scholars. The picture I will paint simply reflects my sense of the situation based on my reading of the literature.

4. Boyd Kirkland, "Elohim and Jehovah in Mormonism and the Bible," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 77–93; and his "Jehovah as Father: The Development of the Mormon Jehovah Doctrine," *Sunstone* 9 (Autumn 1984): 36–44.

5. See in particular Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992). For an appreciation of Barker's work from an LDS perspective, see Kevin Christensen, "Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker's Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies." *Occasional Papers, No. 2*, edited by William Hamblin (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001). I acknowledge that Barker's scholarship is controversial and that not all LDS scholars are enamored with it. See, for example, Terrence L. Szink, "Jerusalem in Lehi's Day," *FARMS Review* 16, no. 2 (2004): 149–59. While Barker happened to be my point of entree to scholarship on the ancient Hebrew pantheon, recent scholarship on this subject is both extensive and broadly based. See Appendix B, "Bibliography of Non-LDS Literature."

6. The Israelites and the Canaanites lived contemporaneously at the same place with approximately the same culture. The Canaanites also antedated the Israelites; scholars refer to Canaanites during the Iron Age as Phoe-

nicians. Many scholars take the position that the Israelites did not conquer the Canaanites but rather simply arose from among them indigenously. The Hebrew language originated as a Canaanite dialect.

7. In general, see Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990).

8. John Day, "Asherah," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, edited by David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:483–87. This article is a summary of Day's longer study, "Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105, no. 3 (1986): 385–408. There are a couple of similar Syro-Palestinian inscriptions of the same pattern referring to "Yahweh and His Asherah." It is unclear whether the reference to "Asherah" in these inscriptions is meant to refer directly to the Goddess or to Her cult object, a wooden pole representing a sacred tree, since proper names in Biblical Hebrew normally do not take a pronominal suffix (the "his" of the English translations). If the reference were to Her cult object, the allusion to Her would be indirect but nonetheless present.

9. On the further transformations of Asherah, see in particular Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 3rd ed. (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1990).

10. Stan Larson, "The King Follett Discourse: A Newly Amalgamated Text," *BYU Studies* 18, no. 2 (1978): 199, as quoted in Kevin L. Barney, "Six Key Concepts in Joseph Smith's Understanding of Genesis 1:1," *BYU Studies* 39 no. 3 (2000): 124.

11. This material is adapted from my unpublished internet essay, "Do We Have a Mother in Heaven?" <http://www.fairlds.org/pubs/MotherInHeaven.pdf> (accessed July 11, 2007).

12. W. L. Reed, "Asherah," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by George Butterick, 5 vols. (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1982), 1:251; Patai, *Hebrew Goddess*, 296–97 note 15.

13. Smith, *Early History of God*, 16.

14. *Ibid.*, 95.

15. Day, "Asherah."

16. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 54.

17. Daniel C. Peterson, "Nephi and His Asherah: A Note on 1 Nephi 11:8–23," in *Mormons, Scripture, and the Ancient World: Studies in Honor of John L. Sorenson*, edited by Davis Bitton (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 191–243. His shorter, popularized version appeared as "Nephi and His Asherah," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9, no. 2 (2000): 16–25. The title is a word play on a series of Syro-Palestinian inscriptions that refer to "Yahweh and His Asherah."

18. "However, in light of the instruction we have received from the Lord Himself, I regard it as inappropriate for anyone in the Church to pray to our Mother in Heaven." Hinckley, "Daughters of God," 100.

19. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (1907; rpt., Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), 81.

20. See the discussion in Tilde Binger, *Asherah: Goddesses in Ugarit, Israel and the Old Testament* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 142-46.

21. So for example "an awesome wind sweeping over the water" in E. A. Speiser, *Genesis: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Vol. 1 of THE ANCHOR BIBLE (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 3.

22. Given that Asherah's particular role was as procreator and given this particular maternal metaphor of brooding over the waters, one might be tempted to suggest that Her particular role in the creation had to do with the *biological* creation of life, which indeed originated in the deep. But this would, of course, simply be a speculation.

23. It is possible, as some scholars have speculated, that the two trees were originally one and the same and were separated only for the dramatic needs of the story.

24. See Kevin L. Barney, "Happy Tu Bishvat," By Common Consent, February 3, 2007, <http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2007/02/happy-tu-bishvat/> (accessed July 22, 2007). When I first learned of this holiday from an article in my local paper, one of the congregations celebrating the holiday was Congregation Ets Chayyim, Hebrew for "Tree of Life."

25. William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005). For reviews of the book from an LDS perspective, see Paul Hoskisson in *BYU Studies* 45, no. 2 (2006): 186-89, and Alyson Skabelund Von Feldt, "Does God Have a Wife?" *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 81-118.

26. I purchased this particular five-inch replica for \$22 plus shipping from <http://www.sacredsource.com> over the internet.

27. Although I was not present, Andrew C. Skinner gave a presentation on the olive tree's position as the preeminent tree of life in Jewish tradition, concluding that many impressive connections help establish the core idea that the tree of life is the most desirable of all things. This presentation was given at a symposium on the tree of life on September 28-29, 2006, sponsored by the Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship at BYU. See the report in "Symposium Explores Widespread Tree of Life Motif," *Insights: An Ancient Window* 26, no. 5 (2006): 1, 3-4.

28. For some interesting introductory commentary on historic Mor-

mon practices of using olive oil in healing, see Jonathan Stapley, "The Evolution of Anointing the Sick," June 8, 2005, <http://www.splendidsun.com/wp/annointing/> ["annointing" is as per original] (accessed July 22, 2007), and Jonathan Stapley, "Consecrated Oil as Medical Therapy," both on By Common Consent, April 17, 2007, <http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2007/04/consecrated-oil-as-medical-therapy/> (accessed July 22, 2007).

29. Jacob Neusner, *The Glory of God Is Intelligence: Four Lectures on the Role of Intellect in Judaism* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1979).

30. See, e.g., Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, 67–95.

31. See 2 Kings 23:7, which reads in part in the KJV: "by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove" [lit. "where the women wove houses (*bottim*) for Asherah"], where the meaning of *bottim* is uncertain.

32. Some Mormon women are offended by having to veil their faces in the temple. I have argued elsewhere that the veil can be understood as a symbol of resurrection. Kevin L. Barney, "The LORD Will Swallow Up Death Forever," By Common Consent, September 7, 2006, <http://www.bycommonconsent.com/2006/09/the-lord-will-swallow-up-death-for-ever/> (accessed July 22, 2007). Another possibility relevant here might be to understand the veil in terms of the weavings women made in honor of Asherah in the ancient temple. The woman's veil can be seen as a microcosm or model version of the larger veil of the temple.

33. There remain two significant issues concerning the nature of our Mother in Heaven that the information I have been able to tease out of the text is not really sufficient to answer. Here I will give my opinion (for whatever it may be worth) on these issues, with the understanding that it is simply speculation on my part. First, is our Mother an embodied being or a spirit? I realize some Mormon feminists like to equate Her with the Holy Ghost, thus making a trinity of Father, Mother, and Son. That arrangement has a certain appeal. And, as I have argued, one of the ways Asherah was reconceptualized was indeed as God's Spirit. But I think it is oversimplistic to equate Asherah with the Holy Ghost. Although I do see an echo of Her in the Holy Ghost, I believe that in actuality She is an embodied being in exactly the same sense that the Father is an embodied being. Indeed, the "logic" that President Hinckley mentioned would seem to require embodiment. Furthermore, embodiment fits both the anthropomorphism of the ancient Israelite pantheon (and its Canaanite precedents) and our modern view of God the Father possessing a tangible, physical body of "flesh and bone" (D&C 130:3). In my view, God the Mother is similarly embodied.

Second, is God the Mother one or many? One could make an argument for a plurality of Mothers. In the Canaanite pantheon, El had multi-

ple consorts; and in nineteenth-century Mormonism when polygamy was actively practiced and defended, having plural wives may have seemed like the more natural arrangement. In my conception, however, there is only one Mother in Heaven to match our Father in Heaven. Such uniqueness is consistent with the Israelite evidence, which worships only Asherah in contradistinction to the multiple consorts of the Canaanite pantheon. Further, in my view a single Mother in Heaven is more consonant with contemporary Mormon thought.

Appendix A

The 40 Specific Occurrences of “Asherah” in the Old Testament

<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
Deuteronomy 16:21	Exodus 34:13
Judges 6:25–26, 28, 30	Deuteronomy 7:5; 12:3
1 Kings 15:13; 16:33	Judges 3:7
2 Kings 13:6; 17:16; 21:3, 7; 23:4, 6–7, 15	1 Kings 14:15, 23; 18:19
2 Chronicles 15:16	2 Kings 17:10; 18:4; 23:14
	2 Chronicles 14:3; 17:6; 19:3; 24:18; 31:1; 33:3, 19; 34:3–4, 7
	Isaiah 17:8; 27:9
	Jeremiah 17:2
	Micah 5:14

Appendix B

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