

[As asherah poles come into vogue, Jewish group goes on crusade](#)

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SANTA MONICA — Out of fashion for 4,000 years, asherah poles have shown up in night clubs and hip restaurants in Los Angeles and Miami, where patrons consider them trendy, mystical symbols of ancient power.

“People want to connect to something with ancient roots, not some modern religion,” says a night club owner who added carved, modern-looking poles to his facility. “People rub them to get good luck with their careers and relationships.”

But a Jewish watchdog group has begun surreptitiously stealing or cutting the poles down, leaving unattractive stumps.

“It’s a little too close to what we went through thousands of years ago, when asherah worship meant anti-Semitism,” says a rabbi who has organized the effort. “If there weren’t power in these symbols, people wouldn’t be attracted to them.”

As far as anyone can tell, the poles first showed up at a fashion show in West L.A., where the set designer used religious icons to spice things up. People raved about the sleek asherah poles so much that local clubs added them to their décor. Poles are often accompanied by a carved bowl at the base where people offer “sacrifices” of spare change, or even jewelry.

“It represents natural religion, I guess,” says Sasha, 23, who dropped a dollar into an asherah bowl before ordering a blue-colored beverage at the bustling Octopus Bar. “It makes me feel connected to the earth and to spiritual energy. Maybe it will help me be lucky.”

But if the covert, unnamed Jewish group has its way, poles will be destroyed as soon as they are displayed.

“I know some people see this as a harmless trend, but we don’t. The associations are very bad,” says one member. •