Term Paper Topics


2. What does the Nash Papyrus contribute to the understanding of the importance of the Decalogue in Jewish spirituality in Egypt before the Common Era? (F. C. Burkitt, “The Hebrew Papyrus of the Ten Commandments.” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 15 (1903) 392-408. [http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/Ted_Hildebrandt/OTeSources/02-Exodus/Text/Articles/Burkitt-10Commands-JQR.pdf](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/Ted_Hildebrandt/OTeSources/02-Exodus/Text/Articles/Burkitt-10Commands-JQR.pdf))

3. Ramesses II (1290-1224 B.C.E.) took great pride in his victory at the Battle of Kadesh (1286 B.C.E.). Explain the tactical mistake he made during the battle, and how the stories of his Battle at the Red Sea (Exod 14:21-31) may be a satire ridiculing Ramesses as a warrior. (Frank Moore Cross, “The Song of the Sea and Canaanite Myth.” In *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: essays in the history of the religion of Israel* 112-144, Cambridge: Harvard University 1973)


1. Pharaohs as early as Narmer (3000 B.C.E.) are portrayed with their right arms raised and holding a mace about to kill the enemies of Egypt. How does this Egyptian motif contribute to the understanding of the biblical description of Yahweh with “…a mighty hand and an outstretched arm”? (Exod 6:1-11; Deut 4:29-38; 1 Kgs 8:37-47; Ps 136:7-17; Ezek 20:29-39). (Thomas E. Levy; Edwin C M van den Brink; Yuval Goren; David Alon, “New Light on King Narmer and the Protodynastic Egyptian Presence in Canaan.” *Biblical Archaeologist* 58, (Mar 1995): 26-35.)

2. Two important theories of archaeology that developed during the first half of the 20th century are Cultural History and Annales Archaeology. Explain a significant difference in the approaches that Cultural Historians and Annales Archaeologists take to their work. (Ian Hodder and
3. Two important theories of archaeology that developed during the second half of the 20th century are Processual Archaeology and Post-Processual Archaeology. Explain a significant difference in the approaches that Processual Archaeologists and Post-Processual Archaeologists take to their work. (Ian Hodder and Scott Hutson, “Post-Processual Archaeology.” In Reading the Past: current approaches to interpretation in archaeology: 206-235. New York: Cambridge University.)


5. What do the reliefs in Sennacherib’s trophy room at Nineveh depicting his conquest of Lachish contribute to understanding the irony of the Nineveh motif in the book of Jonah? (Christoph Uehlinger, “Clio in a world of pictures -- another look at the Lachish reliefs from Sennacherib’s southwest palace at Nineveh.” In “Like a bird in a cage”: 221-305. Edited by Lester L. Grabbe. New York: Sheffield Academic, 2003)


9. Explain why archaeologists consider the House of David Inscription recovered by Avraham Biran at Tel Dan and the Yehoash Inscription to be authentic, but the Ivory Pomegranate Inscription to be a


A Short Guide to Writing Research Papers in an introductory course on the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible

The following notes and references are meant to help you to organize and compose a conventional term paper on archaeology and the Bible. You may find the basic sequence and resources helpful in other disciplines, too.

1. Choosing a Topic

Your topic may be chosen for you, but, if not, aim for one that is (1) interesting to you, (2) manageable with readily available sources, (3) malleable so you can narrow in on an especially interesting or important aspect and (4) arguable. The following resources explain the dynamics of choosing a good topic for any research.

Choose topics suggested by assigned readings, by questions posed in the Study Guide or by the additional sources in the bibliographies.

2. Researching Your Topic

Material about your topic will be found in a variety of sources. In most cases, you can build your research by moving from general to specific treatments of your topic.

In your research, it is vital that you not allow your expanding knowledge of what others think about your topic to drown your own curiosities, sensibilities, and insights. Instead, as your initial questions expand and then diminish with increased knowledge from your research, your own deeper concerns, insights, and point of view should emerge and grow. You might even try to reach new conclusions or arrive at a new perspective about your topic.

A. Consult Standard Sources and Build Bibliography

Encyclopedia articles, dictionaries, and other standard reference tools contain a wealth of material—and helpful bibliographies — to orient you in your topic. Look for the best, most authoritative, and up-to-date treatments. Checking cross-references will deepen your knowledge.

General References:


One volume commentaries


General books on Egypt, Mesopotamia and ancient Israel:
Start listing the sources you consult right away in standard bibliographical format (see section 5, below, for examples of usual formats). Assigning a number to each one facilitates easy reference later in your work. Investing in a bibliography program like Nota Bene (http://www.notabene.com/), EndNote (http://www.endnote.com/), Biblio (http://www.scholarsoft.com/biblio2.htm) or Biblioscape (http://www.biblioscape.com/) will keep your sources and your notes in easy-to-use order.

B. Check Periodical Literature

The eventual quality of your research paper rests entirely on the quality or critical character of your sources. The best research uses academically sound treatments by recognized authorities arguing rigorously from primary sources.

Important scholarship in biblical and archaeological studies is published in books and academic journals. In consulting books and articles dealing with your topic, you will learn where agreements, disagreements, and open questions stand, how older treatments have fared, and the latest relevant tools and insights. Since you cannot consult them all, work back from the latest, looking for the best and most directly relevant articles from the last five, ten, or twenty years, as ambition and time allow.

The primary sources that you are dealing with are the Bible, its Near Eastern parallels, and the archaeological artifacts. Secondary sources are all the articles or books that analyze or interpret these primary sources.

Search the American Theological Library Association database (ATLA) for primary and secondary sources -- books and journal articles
on your topic.

Major biblical journals are:

- Biblica
- Catholic Biblical Quarterly
- Journal of Biblical Literature
- Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
- Vetus Testament
- Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft

You can also find links and some full articles and bibliographies online. Guides to the many religious studies and theological websites include:

- “Wabash Center Guide to Internet Resources for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion” www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/Internet/front.htm
- Blais: Online Catalog of the Libraries of the Claremont Colleges http://blais.claremont.edu/search
- Yale University Divinity School Library www.library.yale.edu/div/divhome.htm
- Princeton Theological Seminary Library www.ptsem.edu/grow/Library/index.htm

D. Taking Notes

With these sources on hand, you can review each source, noting down its most important or relevant facts, observations, or opinions. Take notes only on the relevant portions of secondary sources.

Keep notes using bibliography programs like Nota Bene, EndNote or Biblio or Biblioscape. Record information such as the subtopic, the source and the main idea or quotations.
E. Note or Quote?

While most of the notes you take will simply summarize points made in primary or secondary sources, *direct quotes* are used for (1) word-for-word transcriptions, (2) key words or phrases coined by the author, or (3) especially clear or helpful or summary formulations of an author’s point of view. Remember, re-presenting another’s insight or formulation without attribution is plagiarism. You should also be sure to keep separate notes about your own ideas or insights into the topic as they evolve.

F. When Can I Stop?

As you research your topic in books, articles, or reference works, you will find it coalescing into a unified body of knowledge or at least into a set of interrelated questions. In most cases, your topic will become more and more focused, partly because that is where the open question or key insight or most illuminating instance resides, and partly for sheer manageableability. The vast range of scholarly methods and opinions and differing points of view about many historical topics may force you to settle for laying out a more circumscribed topic carefully. While the sources may never dry up, your increased knowledge gradually gives you confidence that you have the most informed, authoritative, and critical sources covered in your notes.

3. Outlining Your Argument

On the basis of your research findings, in this crucial step you refine or reformulate your general topic and question into a specific question answered by a defensible thesis. You then arrange or rework your supporting arguments into a clear outline that will coherently and convincingly present your thesis.

First, review your research notes carefully. Some of what you initially read now seems obvious or irrelevant, or perhaps the whole topic is simply too massive. But, as your reading and note-taking progressed, you might also have found a piece of your topic, from which a key question or problem has emerged.

- What is the topic or question that is most interesting, enlightening, and manageable?
- What have been the most clarifying and illuminating insights I have found into the topic?
• In what ways have my findings contradicted my initial expectations? Can this serve as a clue to a new and different approach to my question?

• Can I frame my question in a clear way, and, in light of my research, do I have something new to say and defend my thesis that will answer my question and clarify my materials?

In this way you will advance from **topic** and **initial question** to **specific question** and **thesis**.

- **Topic**: What do the excavations at Dan and Bethel contribute to the understanding of the attitude of the prophets in ancient Israel toward public worship?

- **Specific topic**: What have the excavations at Dan and Bethel contributed to the understanding of the book of Amos on public worship there?

- **Specific question**: Does archaeology indicate that the book of Amos wants to abolish public worship at Dan and Bethel or reform it?

- **Thesis**: Amos was concerned with specific abuses, and was not formulating a general position on cultic worship for all times and places.

You can then outline a presentation of your thesis that marshals your research materials into an orderly and convincing argument. Functionally your outline might look like this:

1. **Introduction**. Raise the key question and announce your thesis.

2. **Background**. Present the necessary literary or historical or theological context of the question. Note the “state of the question” or the main agreements and disagreements about it.

3. **Development**. Present your own insight in a clear and logical way. Marshal evidence to support your thesis and develop it further by:
   - offering examples from your primary sources
   - citing or discussing authorities to bolster your argument
   - contrasting your thesis with other treatments, either historical or contemporary
• confirming it by showing how it makes good sense of the data or answers related questions or solves previous puzzles.

4 Conclusion. Restate the thesis in a way that recapitulates your argument and its consequences for the field or the contemporary religious horizon.

The more detailed your outline, the easier will be your writing. Go through your cards, reorganizing them according to your outline. Fill in the outline with the specifics from your research, right down to the topic sentences of your paragraphs. Don't be shy about setting aside any materials that now seem off-point, extraneous, or superfluous to the development of your argument.

4. Writing Your Paper

You are now ready to draft your paper, essentially by putting your outline into sentence form while incorporating specifics from your research notes.

Your main task, initially, is just to get it down on paper in as straightforward a way as possible. Assume your reader is intelligent but knows little or nothing about your particular topic. You can follow your outline closely, but you may find that logical presentation of your argument requires adjusting the outline somewhat. As you write, weave in quotes judiciously from primary or secondary literature to clarify or punch your points. Add brief, strong headings at major junctures. Add footnotes to acknowledge ideas, attribute quotations, reinforce your key points through authorities, or refer the reader to further discussion or resources. Your draft footnotes might refer to your sources as abbreviated in source cards, with page numbers; you can add full publishing data once your text is firm.

5. Reworking Your Draft

Your rough draft puts you within sight of your goal, but your project’s real strength emerges from reworking your initial text in a series of revisions and refinements. In this final phase, make frequent use of one of the many excellent style manuals available for help with grammar, punctuation, footnote form and abbreviations.
Closely examine your work several times, paying attention to:

1 **Structure and Argument.** Do I state my question and thesis accurately? Does my paper do what my Introduction promised? (If not, adjust one or the other.) Do I argue my thesis well? Do the headings clearly guide the reader through my outline and argument? Does this sequence of topics orchestrate the insights my reader needs to understand my thesis?

2 **Style.** Style here refers to writing patterns that enliven prose and engage the reader. Three simple ways to strengthen your academic prose are:

   • Topic sentences. Be sure each paragraph clearly states its main assertion.
   
   • Active verbs. As much as possible, avoid using the linking verb, to be. Rephrase using active verbs.
   
   • Sentence flow. Above all, look for awkward sentences in your draft. Disentangle and rework them into smooth, clear sequences. To avoid boring the reader, vary the length and form of your sentences. Check to see if your paragraphs unfold with some short sentences, questions, and simple declarative ones.
Likewise, tackle some barbarisms that frequently invade academic prose:

- **Repetition.** Unless you need the word count, this can go.

- **Unnecessary words.** Need we say more? Such filler as “the fact that” and “in order to” and “there is/are” numb your reader. Similarly, such qualifiers as somewhat, fairly, rather, very take the wind from the adjective that follows.

- **Jargon.** Avoid technical terms when possible. Explain all technical terms that you do use. Avoid or translate foreign-language terms.

- **Overly complex sentences.** Short sentences are best. Avoid compound-complex sentences and run-on sentences. Avoid *etc.*

3  **Spelling, Grammar, Punctuation.** Along with typographical errors, look for stealth errors, the common but overlooked grammatical gaffes: subject-verb disagreement, dangling participles, mixed verb tenses, over- and under-use of commas, semicolon use, and inconsistency in capitalization, hyphenation, italicization, or treatment of numbers.

Miriam-Webster Online contains both the Collegiate Dictionary and Thesaurus: [www.m-w.com/](http://www.m-w.com/)

4  **Footnotes.** Your footnotes will give credit to your sources for every quote and for other people’s ideas you have used. Here are samples of typical citation formats in SBL Manual style:

**Basic order:**

Author's full name, Book *Title*, ed., trans., series, edition, vol. number (Place: Publisher, year), pages.

**Book:**


**Book in a series:**

Edited book:

Essay or chapter in an edited book:

Multi-volume work:

Journal article:

Encyclopedia article:

Website source:

For a full listing of citation styles for internet sources, see “Citation Style”: www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html

CD ROM source:
Helmar Junghans, Martin Luther: Exploring His Life and Times — 1483—1546, CD ROM (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998).

Bible:
Cite in your text (not in your footnotes) by book, chapter, and verse: Gen
1: 1-2; Exod 7: 13; Rom 5:1-8. In your Bibliography list the version of Bible you have used.

**Repeated citations:**

If a footnote cites the immediately preceding source, use *ibidem*, meaning “there,” abbreviated:

- 61. Ibid., 39.

Sources cited earlier can be referred to by author or editor's names, a shorter title, and page number:


5 **Bibliography.** Your Bibliography can be any of several types:

- *Works Cited*: just the works—books, articles, etc.—that appear in your footnotes
- *Works Consulted*: all the works you checked in your research, whether they were cited or not in the final draft
- *Select Bibliography*: primary and secondary works that, in your judgment, are the most important source materials on this topic, whether cited or not in your footnotes.

Some teachers might ask for your bibliographic entries to be annotated, i.e., to include a comment from you on the content, import, approach, and helpfulness of each work.

Bibliographic style differs somewhat from footnote style. Here are samples of typical bibliographic formats:

**Basic order:**


**Book:**


**Book in a series:**

**Essay or chapter in an edited book:**


**Multi-volume work:**


**Journal article:**


**Encyclopedia article:**


**Website source:**


For a full listing of citation styles for internet sources, see “Citation Style”: www.bedfordstmartins.com/online/citex.html

**CD ROM source:**


**Bible:**

After incorporating the revisions and refinements into your paper, print out a fresh copy, proofread it carefully, make final corrections, format it to your teacher’s or institution’s specifications, and print your final paper.

A short guide to writing research papers in Hebrew Bible. © 2007 Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
Directions for Digital Research Projects

Project 1
Directed Research Project

Unlike the conventional term paper which is completed during the final days of the semester, this directed research project is semester long. Three or four times during the semester you will submit portions of the project for evaluation (proposal, Benjamin summary, database search and abstracts). The comments will allow you to revise and improve your work throughout the semester. Each phase of the project introduces you to skills essential for doing research in any field. Learning to write a proposal teaches you how to focus your research. Learning to do a database search teaches you how to find material on your topic. Learning to use Interlibrary Loan teaches you how to acquire materials you need to read even when they are not available in the library on your campus. Learning to write summaries and abstracts teaches you how to identify the thesis in an article or a book chapter, and how to identify the arguments which support that thesis, and to apply them to your own work.

DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING A ONE-PAGE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Goal: Identify a specific topic for your research, and explain its relevance.

Style

1. Create a file on your hard drive with the title: Last three digits of the Class Identification Number_Proposal_YourLastName, for example: 384_Proposal_Benjamin.
2. Create a short and interesting title for your research. Center the title using the Times New Roman 18 pt font.
3. Use Don C. Benjamin, Old Testament Story, an introduction (2004) to identify the chapters and verses from the Bible to which your title refers, and put these in parenthesis under your title, e.g. (Gen 2:25—4:2). Use the Times New Roman 12 pt font here and throughout the rest of your proposal.
4. Center your name on the line under the title. Put the class identification number in parenthesis after you name
In daily language today people of faith use "God" to refer to the Creator or Savior about whom they were taught by our parents or other significant adults in their lives. They also use "God" to refer to the subject of their personal experiences of transcendence in life and in prayer. These two theologies are seldom identical with the theologies of ancient Israel and its neighbors. To emphasize those differences I ask students to reserving the word "God" for the subject of the Creator and Savior about whom people of faith were taught, or whom they have experienced, and to use "Yahweh", "divine patron" or "divine assembly" for the divine figures in the world of the Bible.


"Family" in North America identifies two adults in a more or less stable relationship with their 1.72 (1966) or 1.13 (2003) children. The basic community in the Bible was a "household" made up of as many sets of childbearing adults and their dependents as was necessary for the entire group to feed and protect itself. In the Bedouin household there are five generations; in the household in ancient Israel there are four generations. (Matthews and Benjamin 1993:7)

In topic sentences use only nouns, not pronouns – "it" – or demonstratives – "this".

Content
First Paragraph (4 pt)

16. Begin the topic sentence in the first paragraph using the format: In the Inauguration of Abraham at Mt. Moriah (Gen 21:33—22:19)...
17. Describe -- do not interpret -- the biblical tradition that you are going to research, and the particular part of the tradition to which archaeology might contribute a better understanding.
18. Summarize only what appears in the Bible; do not summarize the interpretation in Old Testament Story, an introduction or in Stones & Stories.

Second Paragraph (2 pts)

19. Ask one question about the biblical tradition described in the first paragraph, which you want to research. For example, what do you need to know about the world of the Bible in order to understand this part of the tradition? Focus on some aspect of the tradition to which archaeology could contribute an understanding.
20. Explain the question. Do not describe your research strategy. Explain why the answer to your question is not obvious.

Third Paragraph (4 pts)

21. Propose one hypothetical answer to the question you have raised in the second paragraph. Explain how this answer would have a positive influence on either a particular religious tradition, with which you are familiar, or on the majority culture in the United States today. Start this sentence with “On the one hand...”
22. Propose another hypothetical answer to the question you have raised. Explain how this answer would have a negative influence on a religious tradition, or popular culture. Start this sentence with “On the other hand....”
   Do not research your question at this point, just think about it. The purpose of this third paragraph of the proposal is to identify the relevance of the research question, not to proposal answers that you will need to argue later in the paper.
23. Propose two different answers to your question, not just one answer with a both a positive and a negative impact.

To improve your writing, follow the directions of William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style, 4th edition (2000). It’s a classic!
A Widow’s Commitment
(Ruth 1:1-22)

Your Name Here (class number here)

In the Parable of a Preserving Widow (Ruth 1:1-22) the household of Elimelech and Naomi is struck with famine and death. Her two sons marry Moabite women -- Ruth and Orpah. Both of Naomi’s sons die. Despite their attempts to console Naomi, she commands both Ruth and Orpah to go back to their mothers’ houses. Orpah obeys; Ruth remains with Naomi and pledges her life to her by negotiating a covenant with her.

Why does Ruth choose to continue living with Naomi when she could have gone home? When Naomi tells Ruth to go home, one would assume that she would have been more than willing to return home instead of staying with her mother-in-law who has lost her husband, her sons and all her material possessions.

On the one hand Ruth proves her loyalty not only to Naomi, but also to her husband, Chilion. Even after his death, she is loyal to him by
choosing to remain loyal to his mother. Ruth’s loyalty would have a positive impact on men and women today by inspiring them to be faithful. Some men and women can hardly remain loyal to their spouses while they are alive, let alone after their deaths. On the other hand, perhaps Ruth remains with Naomi because she feels guilty that since she has lost her husband and both her sons, she has no one. Ruth’s decision to stay out of obligation rather than love and commitment would have a negative impact on men and women today because a good deed with a crooked heart is almost worse than a bad deed with a good heart. So, Ruth remaining because of guilt would teach that doing the right thing for the wrong reason is acceptable.

DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING A FIVE PAGE SUMMARY OF BENJAMIN (2004)

The Summary of Benjamin allows you to demonstrate that you understand – not that you believe or agree with – how your instructor works with the tradition you are studying.

Goal: Demonstrate what you have learned from class and apply it to your own work. Show that you can learn by listening and reading.

Style

1. Create a file on your hard-drive with title: 315_Benjamin_YourLastName.
2. Use your revised proposal as the first page of 315_Benjamin. Do not submit the same unrevised copy you submitted as your first research report. Do not submit the corrected copy of 315_Proposal with the comments still in place.
3. Insert the following subtitle immediately following the last paragraph of your proposal and aligned with the left-hand margin:


4. Write no less than three, no more than five pages. Three pages is three full pages and one sentence on page four, not two full pages and one sentence on page three.

Content

Topic Paragraph

6. State clearly in this opening paragraph how Benjamin would answer the question that you raised in your proposal.
7. To understand how Benjamin would answer your question, carefully read the section in Old Testament Story, an introduction dealing with the tradition you selected. Use your notes from class. If you have a digital copy of OTS on the CD that came with the book, you can search the entire text for other places where Benjamin discusses your topic. You may also want to go to the website http://www.doncbenjamin.com/ to see if there are updates that will be helpful.

Supporting Arguments

8. Explain everything your reader needs to know to understand Benjamin’s response to your question. Each paragraph should explain only one supporting argument for Benjamin’s answer to your question.
9. Summarize only what helps you with your own research. Do not just summarize everything you have learned, just those things that are useful.
10. After the topic sentence do not write: “Dr. Benjamin says…” Explain Benjamin’s interpretation of the tradition you are studying in your own words.
11. If you want to document a paragraph, place (Benjamin 2004: p) at the end of the last sentence. Cite only one or two pages, not an entire chapter.

**Final Paragraph**

12. Restate what how you have applied what you have learned from Benjamin to the question that you raised in your proposal in one strong concluding paragraph. Summarize the supporting arguments.

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**SAMPLE FIVE-PAGE SUMMARY OF BENJAMIN (2004)**

**Women’s Rights or Not**

*(Gen 12:9-13:1)*

Your Name Here (class number here)

In the story Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh *(Gen 12:9-13:1)*, Abraham and Sarah face severe famine. They journey to the lands of Egypt where they are strangers. With little to offer and no means to take what they need by force, Abraham instructs Sarah to claim that she is his sister, not his wife, in order to be allowed passage into the foreign land. The pharaoh is so taken by Sarah’s beauty that he takes her as his wife. The pharaoh treats his brother-in-law very well, giving him many animals and slaves. Then Yahweh plagues Pharaoh’s house. Pharaoh confronts Abraham about lying of his relation to Sarah. Pharaoh
demands that Abraham take Sarah back, and he sent them with all of their things out of his land.

How is it that Abraham can handover Sarah to Pharaoh without hesitation and Sarah submit to this willingly? Most men would give their lives for the women they love. Most women would be devastated to find themselves in this situation.

On the one hand, Abraham and Sarah exercise their shrewdness in making covenants. They do what they must in order to survive and save themselves, although at a steep sacrifice. Also, Sarah demonstrates the deep commitment she has to her husband and family by making such a sacrifice. Abraham and Sarah’s business dealings would have a positive impact on men and women today by inspiring them to take full advantage of their limited resources in order to compensate for their shortcomings. Sarah would further contribute positively by reinforcing the importance of commitment to one’s family. On the other hand, perhaps Sarah mindlessly obeys Abraham, thereby being objectified by him. Abraham and Sarah’s relationship would have a negative impact on Western society because it contradicts our ideals of equal rights. Sarah acting solely at the will of her husband would encourage male superiority.

According to Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Story, an introduction* (2004: 47-48), Abraham and Sarah allow Pharaoh to take Sarah as his wife because they are shrewd businesspeople. Abraham and Sarah are in a dire situation; if they do not find a place to graze their livestock, all that they have will die. They must gain safe passage to Egypt in order to survive. As man and woman this would be highly unlikely. However, as sister and brother, they realize great leverage in their negotiations with Pharaoh.

Sarah and Abraham are herders in Syria-Palestine. As such, they share a symbiotic relationship with farmers. The herders’ livestock graze the stubble left behind after farmers’ harvests and enjoy the water of the land. In return the livestock leave droppings, fertilizing the land for the farmers’ next growing season. Farmers and herders need each other in order to survive. It is to a herder’s advantage to be fast talking and maintain shrewd business skills in order to cut covenants, particularly when in foreign lands. The Egyptians are skeptical of foreign herders and protective of their land and water. They view the herders of Syria-Palestine as spies and tricksters who lack land and children and prey on that of the Egyptians (Benjamin 2004: 215). They must be able to negotiate covenants in order to overcome these fears.

When famine strikes Syria-Palestine, Sarah and Abraham must migrate south to Egypt. When they reach the border crossing, they
demonstrate their shrewd business skills, securing their survival.
Abraham is fast talking; Sarah uses her beauty. They know that if they try to negotiate as husband and wife, it is very likely that the Egyptians will kill Abraham and have their way with Sarah. In order to avoid this, they only reveal their sibling relationship, implying that Sarah is an eligible maiden (Genesis: 12:13). At the border crossing the Egyptians are overcome by Sarah’s beauty. They present her to Pharaoh, who experiences similar feelings. He takes her as his wife and not only spares her brother, Abraham, but bestows upon him many gifts.

Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh is an ancestor story, revealing alternative sources of power to the Hebrews who do not possess overt powers like Pharaoh. Abraham and Sarah have neither the land nor the children to compete with Pharaoh. Yet, through their skilled use of limited resources of beauty and negotiation skill, they are able overcome the power of Pharaoh. They are allowed to graze, Abraham’s life is spared, the Egyptians are impotent at the thought of having sex with Sarah, and Pharaoh grants them abundant gifts. Further, they avoid the standard six years of slavery in which a client in this type of covenant is subject. Pharaoh and his household suffer plague for taking a married woman as his wife. In order to cure this impotence, Pharaoh offers them a generous settlement to leave his land. By using these alternative forms of power, Sarah and Abraham secure their survival and acquire far more
than what they had prior to entering Egypt. This story offers hope to the powerless; It celebrates the Hebrews’ ability to cut a covenant.

As head of the household, Abraham is responsible for protecting its women, in his case, Sarah. If the Egyptians were to rape Sarah as they desire, Abraham would be shamed and they would be right in taking over his household. However, Abraham’s fast talking and Sarah’s good looks prevent this from occurring. All of the Egyptians are impotent around Sarah. Through shrewd business skill, Abraham demonstrates the honor and stability of his household (Benjamin 2004: 211).

While negotiating at the border, Abraham and Sarah do not lie. This would be frowned upon under most any circumstance. Rather, the couple is shrewd. They reveal only what is necessary, and allow the Egyptians to draw their own conclusions. Their sexual interest in Sarah leads them to act in her favor. She and Abraham merely oblige them. The Egyptians’ lust carries the shrewd couple all the way to the favor of Pharaoh and a pleasing covenant.

Sarah is equally shrewd and a completely willing participant in the negotiations for her household’s survival. She realizes there are certain risks involved as well as the importance of her role in negotiating the covenant, and Sarah is strong for the sake of her household. As it turns out, the Egyptians at the border want to rape her but are unable; Upon marriage to Pharaoh she is saved because he is also plagued with
impotence. Although she assumes significant risks, Sarah is not sexually abused at all. This commitment is instrumental in setting her household free.

As an ancestor story, Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh teaches about a single aspect of life while honoring the Hebrews’ heritage. It celebrates the ability of the seemingly powerless to overcome significant adversity. The story’s focus is the celebration of a single virtue, shrewdness. Sarah uses beauty while Abraham is fast talking, tricking Pharaoh into giving them land and children. The Bible assumes that even good people suffer flaws. It does not intend to scrutinize them. Lying and chauvinism are not even mentionable in the greater context of the story (Benjamin 2004: 264).

Later in Genesis, two stories very closely parallel Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh (Benjamin 2004: 70). In the first, Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Abimelech, the couple migrates to another foreign land, Gerar. Again, Abraham and Sarah reveal only their sibling relationship, fearing for Abraham’s life. Like Pharaoh, Abimelech, king of Gerar, takes Sarah for his own and then suffers plague. Abraham and Sarah use their shrewd business skills to assure the safety of their household and trick Abimelech, king of Gerar, into offering them some of his land and children to cure his own impotence (Genesis: 20:1-8). This story reinforces everything taught by Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with
Pharaoh. The second parallel is the story of how Isaac and Rebekah Negotiate with Abimelech. The land of this couple suffered famine, and so they went to Gerar. Fearing that the men might take Isaac’s life in order to have the beautiful Rebakah, they too claim a sibling relationship. When Abimelech discovers their marriage and Rebekah’s and Isaac’s fears for their safety, he orders his people to let them be (Genesis 26:1-11). In this story, Isaac and Rebekah use their shrewdness to secure their household’s safety from someone much more powerful. This story reiterates the power of the powerless.

In conclusion, Abraham and Sarah allow Pharaoh to take Sarah as his wife for many reasons. First, as nomadic herders, Abraham and Sarah must be skilled at cutting covenants. This is a necessary part of their shrewd business strategy. Second, they do only what they must in order to ensure the safety and longevity of their household. Third, it is characteristic of ancestor stories, like Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh, to demonstrate alternative sources of power of the otherwise powerless. Good looks and fast talking can be used to overcome great odds. Fourth, the couple’s strategy, which protects its women, demonstrates that Abraham is indeed worthy of heading his household. Fifth, it is also typical of ancestor stories to teach about a single aspect of life, in this story, shrewdness, particularly how to cut a covenant. Implications of lying and chauvinism have no place in an interpretation of Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh. Further, multiple close
parallels reinforce a positive interpretation of the story. Therefore, Pharaoh taking Sarah as his wife is part of a shrewd business strategy of Abraham and Sarah because of these numerous reasons.

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**DIRECTIONS FOR DOING A DATABASE SEARCH**

Now that you understand what your instructor is doing with the tradition you are studying, you need to see how other scholars interpret the same tradition. The ATLA database puts you in touch with virtually everything available in print on the tradition.

1. Go to ASU homepage [http://asu.edu/](http://asu.edu/)
2. At the bottom of the page click on link to Libraries in the ACADEMICS column.
3. On Library homepage click on link to Research Databases.
4. Click on the letter A to search these Research Databases By Title.
5. Click on link to ATLA Religion Database + ATLAS (1949+)
6. On ATLA homepage click on Connect
7. On EbscoHost homepage click on Advanced Search and then Scriptures.
8. Enter the book of the Bible you have selected. For example, Joshua or Ruth and click on Browse.
9. Check the boxes to the left of the portions of the biblical book that pertain to your passage and click Search.
10. Read through the titles selected by EbscoHost, and if they are relevant to your topic, click Add to the right of entries that are relevant. Choose only entries that at books or articles. Do not choose Sermons, Poems or Book Reviews. At the top of the column the folder icon will indicate: Folder has items
11. When you have selected 5-10 entries, click on the Folder has items icon.
12. Check the box to the left of the entries you want to use and Click on the Save icon
13. Click the File tab and choose a location on your hard drive for the file.
CSE FORMAT FOR A JOURNAL ARTICLE


CSE FORMAT FOR AN ESSAY OR CHAPTER FROM A BOOK


13. Revise your proposal and Benjamin summary.
15. Center “Further Reading” in 18 pt Times New Roman font.
16. Using the 12 pt Times New Roman font list the five journal articles or book chapters you are going to read in alphabetical order by the author’s last name.

SAMPLE DATABASE SEARCH FOR FIVE ARTICLES/CHAPTERS

**Women’s Rights or Not**  
*(Gen 12:9-13:1)*

Your Name Here (Course Number Here)

In the story Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh (Gen 12:9-13:1), Abraham and Sarah face severe famine. They journey to the lands of Egypt where they are strangers. With little to offer and no means to take what they need by force, Abraham instructs Sarah to claim that she is his sister, not his wife, in order to be allowed passage into the foreign land. The pharaoh is so taken by Sarah’s beauty that he takes
her as his wife. The pharaoh treats his brother-in-law very well, giving him many animals and slaves. Then Yahweh plagues Pharaoh’s house. Pharaoh confronts Abraham about lying of his relation to Sarah. Pharaoh demands that Abraham take Sarah back, and he sent them with all of their things out of his land.

How is it that Abraham can handover Sarah to Pharaoh without hesitation and Sarah submit to this willingly? Most men would give their lives for the women they love. Most women would be devastated to find themselves in this situation.

On the one hand, Abraham and Sarah exercise their shrewdness in making covenants. They do what they must in order to survive and save themselves, although at a steep sacrifice. Also, Sarah demonstrates the deep commitment she has to her husband and family by making such a sacrifice. Abraham and Sarah’s business dealings would have a positive impact on men and women today by inspiring them to take full advantage of their limited resources in order to compensate for their shortcomings. Sarah would further contribute positively by reinforcing the importance of commitment to one’s family. On the other hand, perhaps Sarah mindlessly obeys Abraham, thereby being objectified by him. Abraham and Sarah’s relationship would have a negative impact on Western society because it contradicts our ideals of equal rights. Sarah
acting solely at the will of her husband would encourage male superiority.


According to Don C. Benjamin, *Old Testament Story, an introduction* (2004: 47-48), Abraham and Sarah allow Pharaoh to take Sarah as his wife because they are shrewd businesspeople. Abraham and Sarah are in a dire situation; If they do not find a place to graze there livestock, all that they have will die. They must gain safe passage to Egypt in order to survive. As man and woman this would be highly unlikely. However, as sister and brother, they realize great leverage in their negotiations with Pharaoh.

Sarah and Abraham are herders in Syria-Palestine. As such, they share a symbiotic relationship with farmers. The herders’ livestock graze the stubble left behind after farmers’ harvests and enjoy the water of the land. In return the livestock leave droppings, fertilizing the land for the farmers’ next growing season. Farmers and herders need each other in order to survive. It is to a herder’s advantage to be fast talking and maintain shrewd business skills in order to cut covenants, particularly when in foreign lands. The Egyptians are skeptical of foreign herders and protective of their land and water. They view the herders of Syria-Palestine as spies and tricksters who lack land and children and prey on
that of the Egyptians (Benjamin 2004: 215). They must be able to negotiate covenants in order to overcome these fears.

When famine strikes Syria-Palestine, Sarah and Abraham must migrate south to Egypt. When they reach the border crossing, they demonstrate their shrewd business skills, securing their survival. Abraham is fast talking; Sarah uses her beauty. They know that if they try to negotiate as husband and wife, it is very likely that the Egyptians will kill Abraham and have their way with Sarah. In order to avoid this, they only reveal their sibling relationship, implying that Sarah is an eligible maiden (Genesis: 12:13). At the border crossing the Egyptians are overcome by Sarah’s beauty. They present her to Pharaoh, who experiences similar feelings. He takes her as his wife and not only spares her brother, Abraham, but bestows upon him many gifts.

Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh is an ancestor story, revealing alternative sources of power to the Hebrews who do not possess overt powers like Pharaoh. Abraham and Sarah have neither the land nor the children to compete with Pharaoh. Yet, through their skilled use of limited resources of beauty and negotiation skill, they are able overcome the power of Pharaoh. They are allowed to graze, Abraham’s life is spared, the Egyptians are impotent at the thought of having sex with Sarah, and Pharaoh grants them abundant gifts. Further, they avoid the standard six years of slavery in which a client in this type of covenant is
subject. Pharaoh and his household suffer plague for taking a married woman as his wife. In order to cure this impotence, Pharaoh offers them a generous settlement to leave his land. By using these alternative forms of power, Sarah and Abraham secure their survival and acquire far more than what they had prior to entering Egypt. This story offers hope to the powerless; It celebrates the Hebrews’ ability to cut a covenant.

As head of the household, Abraham is responsible for protecting its women, in his case, Sarah. If the Egyptians were to rape Sarah as they desire, Abraham would be shamed and they would be right in taking over his household. However, Abraham’s fast talking and Sarah’s good looks prevent this from occurring. All of the Egyptians are impotent around Sarah. Through shrewd business skill, Abraham demonstrates the honor and stability of his household (Benjamin 2004: 211).

While negotiating at the border, Abraham and Sarah do not lie. This would be frowned upon under most any circumstance. Rather, the couple is shrewd. They reveal only what is necessary, and allow the Egyptians to draw their own conclusions. Their sexual interest in Sarah leads them to act in her favor. She and Abraham merely oblige them. The Egyptians’ lust carries the shrewd couple all the way to the favor of Pharaoh and a pleasing covenant.

Sarah is equally shrewd and a completely willing participant in the negotiations for her household’s survival. She realizes there are certain
risks involved as well as the importance of her role in negotiating the covenant, and Sarah is strong for the sake of her household. As it turns out, the Egyptians at the border want to rape her but are unable; Upon marriage to Pharaoh she is saved because he is also plagued with impotence. Although she assumes significant risks, Sarah is not sexually abused at all. This commitment is instrumental in setting her household free.

As an ancestor story, Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh teaches about a single aspect of life while honoring the Hebrews’ heritage. It celebrates the ability of the seemingly powerless to overcome significant adversity. The story’s focus is the celebration of a single virtue, shrewdness. Sarah uses beauty while Abraham is fast talking, tricking Pharaoh into giving them land and children. The Bible assumes that even good people suffer flaws. It does not intend to scrutinize them. Lying and chauvinism are not even mentionable in the greater context of the story (Benjamin 2004: 264).

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Fifth, it is also typical of ancestor stories to teach about a single aspect of life, in this story, shrewdness, particularly how to cut a covenant. Implications of lying and chauvinism have no place in an interpretation of Abraham and Sarah Negotiate with Pharaoh. Further, multiple close parallels reinforce a positive interpretation of the story. Therefore, Pharaoh taking Sarah as his wife is part of a shrewd business strategy of Abraham and Sarah because of these numerous reasons.
Further Reading


DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING A FIVE-SENTENCE ABSTRACT

Writing abstracts and summaries of five other scholars besides your instructor gives you the opportunity to listen the scholarly conversation about your tradition, and to think about how that conversation can apply to the question you have raised.

Retrieve five articles/book chapters in the Further Reading list.

1. Log on the homepage for the Hayden Library at ASU from a terminal on campus or off campus on-line.
2. Click on “Find” link.
3. Click on the link for the “journal” or “book”, and enter bibliographic information.
4. If the article or book can be retrieved on-line through Hayden Library, then download it to your hard drive.
5. If the article or book is on the shelves at Hayden Library, note the call number where you can find it.
6. If the article or book is not at Hayden Library, go back to the homepage.
7. Click on “Services” link.
8. Click on the “Interlibrary Loan (ILL)” link and fill in the personal, and then the bibliographic information for the article or chapter.
9. After you have submitted an ILL request, be sure to check each week on-line at this location to see if your book or article has been received. If you have not received your material within two weeks, go to the ILL desk in Hayden Library and follow up on your request in person.
10. If you need more information on the article or book, go to the ATLA database and search for the MARC record for the article. ATLA is the abbreviation for the database of books and articles published, which is compiled by the American Theological Library Association.
11. Revise your proposal
12. Revise your Benjamin Summary
13. Write a five sentence abstract for each article
14. Write a one paragraph abstract for each article or book chapter with no less than five sentences.

   a. The first sentence in the abstract should be a strong, clear topic sentence stating the conclusion of the article or the book. (1 pt)

   b. Sentences two, three and four should summarize three arguments used to support the conclusion. (3 pts)

   c. The fifth sentence should apply the conclusion of the article to your research topic. (1 pt)

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**SAMPLE FIVE-SENTENCE ABSTRACTS**

**Good Treatment for Good Deeds**

(Ruth 2:1-23)

Your Name Here (class number here)
In the story Parables of Workers in a Wheat Field (Ruth 2:1-23), Ruth comes to live with her mother-in-law, Naomi in Bethlehem. When they arrive it is harvest time and Ruth goes to work in the fields collecting grain. Ruth is working in the field of Boaz who is a relative of Naomi. Boaz takes notice of Ruth and takes her under his wing. He tells all the harvesters to be good to her and not to touch her. Ruth does not understand why he is being so nice to her as she is from a foreign land. Naomi tells Ruth to only work in the field of Boaz as someone else might not be as good to her.

Why is Boaz so kind to Ruth? Boaz shows Ruth unconditional kindness however it is not immediately clear why he shows her this. It is unclear why Boaz would show such kindness to someone who is virtually a stranger.

On one hand having heard how well Ruth has been to Naomi Boaz may feel that her hospitality should be rewarded. This understanding of Boaz’ kindness to Ruth would promotes the positive idea of loving strangers for their hospitality today. On the other hand, if Boaz’ kindness to Ruth may be condescending. She is only a woman who cannot take care of herself. This understanding of Boaz’ kindness to Ruth would have a negative impact on women’s equality today because it would characterize them as needing men to care for them.

According to Don C. Benjamin *Old Testament Story, an introduction* (2004: 169-171), feeding a women is another way of saying a marriage took place. By allowing Ruth to have access to grains, therefore Boaz is courting her and marrying her. Boaz is being nice to Ruth because he wants to marry her. Even today when man and woman marry, they will feed each other cake.

Ruth is a stranger in a new land. The workers in the wheat fields do not welcome her, as a foreigner from Moab; she should not be allowed to work the fields of Judah. The workers become upset when she continues to harvest the grains, leading to the climax of the story. The workers report Ruth to the land owner, Boaz. The workers expect Boaz to take action and get rid of her; however Boaz does just the opposite. Boaz welcomes her into his home and treats her like an heir instead of a stranger.

Ruth also shows kindness toward Naomi which is repaid by compassion from Boaz to Ruth. Ruth shows Naomi a great deal of respect, kindness and compassion which Naomi is not deserving of. Naomi tells Ruth she does not need her kindness and company, there for releasing her of any legal obligation, Ruth still wants to care for her mother in-law. Ruth goes above and beyond what she must do under the laws of that time. Boaz does a similar act for Ruth. Legally he only needs to let her work in the field for a day but again, he goes above what he is
obligated to do by allowing her to work longer showing that love and kindness are more powerful than the law.

Parable of Workers in a Wheat Field also increases the crisis of Parable of Preserving a Widow. The crisis in Preserving a Widow is there is no child for Naomi and no child for Ruth. By returning to Judah, Naomi hopes to gain a child from Ruth and Boaz. By when Ruth is not welcomed by the workers this only increases the crisis for Naomi.

By allowing Ruth to continue working in the field, Boaz shows great hospitality toward her. He is showing that he does not care where she is from, he welcomes all as Yahweh does.

The world of the Bible traditionally, Boaz would only be obligated to allow Ruth to work in the field for a day or two, but he allows her to work through the harvest season.

The story of Ruth is a parable and not an ancestor story. The Parable of Workers in a Wheat Field asks the reader to ponder whether or not having a stranger work in the field is a curse or a blessing. By showing hospitality to Ruth, Boaz is leaving the door open to criticism or praise for this act.

Since there are no denouement episodes in parables, the end of the story asks a question. One of the questions the parable leaves the reader
with is, why should the first be last and why should the people of Judah be nice to strangers like Ruth?

Many different people and cultures define a foreigner in many different ways. In the story of Workers in a Wheat Field, Ruth asks Boaz why he favors her when she is a stranger. By asking this she basically wants to know if she is blessed or cursed.

Ruth negotiates with Boaz which emphasizes the idea that kindness is never forgotten. Boaz grants Ruth gleaning privileges for the season not just a day, he then offers her security and protection, finally he offers her water and water breaks. This shows how welcoming Boaz was and how important hospitality was.

Boaz gives Ruth more privileges in the field also than the law obligates him to. He grants three privileges but then goes three steps further by granting her hot meals, by offering Ruth hot meals Boaz saves her from eating parched grains like the other workers, gleaning longer which includes standing sheaves and finally Boaz asks the other workers to show her where the good grain is. The parable reminds the reader that with these gestures, Israel does not deserve Yahweh, Naomi does not deserve Ruth and Ruth does not deserve Boaz. However while they are in the wheat field, Boaz promises to Ruth that Yahweh the divine patron of Israel will reward her for seeking refuge in his land.
Harvesting and gleaning the grain also has a sexual meaning. Boaz wants to give Ruth good grains which can also have a sexual meaning. Sexual meanings are present throughout the whole Book of Ruth. At the threshing floor Ruth asks Boaz to make good on his promise that he made about Yahweh blessing her since she came to the land for refuge. Ruth wants Boaz to give her a child so that Naomi can be restored. Ruth asks Boaz to cover her with his cloak which is another way of saying she wishes to have sexual intercourse with him. A cloak is a way of describing a husband's wing. When Boaz extends his hospitality to Ruth, he is covering her with his wings. This is another way of saying that by covering her with his wings, he will have sexual intercourse with her which will result in a child. By having a child Naomi and Ruth will be persevering widows.

Even though the parable leaves the audience with a question, the parable also gives an answer. The parable questions whether being a foreigner is a blessing or a curse, in the end shows to be a blessing. Ruth and Naomi are blessed with children, therefore making them persevering widows. The parable shows that by being a welcoming person, the good deed will be rewarded. Boaz is portrayed similar to Yahweh, in that he welcomes all people and does not judge. This story shows how important hospitality was in the time of the Bible.
Further Reading


Overseers are portrayed as confused and apologetic. For example, Ruth leaves the field as Boaz is arriving. Boaz instructs Ruth on the rules for gleaning in his field such as do not glean in another field, work with the other women, feel free to drink the water and finally the men shall not molest you. It is clear from the last instruction that the men have done something to make her uncomfortable and embarrassed. This suggests that he is showing kindness to Ruth but he is also protecting her from the men who are sexually harassing her in the fields.


Aser in Hebrew means “who”. When Naomi makes a blessing it is unclear “whom” she is blessing: Yahweh or Boaz. The blessing could be meant for either.. Naomi could have meant the blessing for Yahweh but because of the haste of the casual conversation phrased it in an ambiguous way. The blessing could have been meant got Boaz because he possesses features of Yahweh. Therefore, the kindness that Boaz shows to Ruth is really the kindness of Yahweh blessing Ruth and Naomi with land and children.


The phrase “gleaning” offers up the idea that gleaning was not part of the harvest because according to the legal requirement, there should be something left for widows to glean, offering the idea that gleaning was not in fact part of the harvest. The phrase “young women” suggests that the women work for Boaz as servants to the harvesters, Boaz tells Ruth to follow them, implying she is below the servant women. Three ideas come from this thought, men worked the harvest, women picked up the stocks and the widows gleaned the field. This idea suggests that Boaz
was kind to Ruth because, one it was part of the legal requirement and two gleaning is the job of widows only.


Naomi offers a blessing to the man who allowed Ruth to glean, however a major question is raised. It is unclear if Naomi is offering the blessing to Boaz or Yahweh, in Hebrew the work aser means “who” but in the many translations of the Bible, the meaning has been interpreted many ways. Rebera feels confident that aser is in reference to Yahweh, while the reading from Collins considers aser to be in reference to Boaz, however the true identity of the beneficiary is open to interpretation, and there are supporting arguments for both Yahweh and for Boaz. The blessing could be to Boaz since there are parallels of aser meaning in other biblical stories that refer to an individual other than Yahweh, however in other biblical translations the work aser undoubtedly refers to Yahweh. It is important to understand who the blessing is directed to so the audience will understand why Boaz shows such kindness towards Ruth.


When Boaz instructs Ruth to stay in his field for others might cause her harm, originally the phrase “to harm” was translated as “to molest”. The fields are a place for unattached foreign women and therefore the potential sexual violence can be considered, this is where the word ‘molest’ would be appropriate. It could be considered that Boaz was not only showing kindness to Ruth, but also protecting her from the sexual predators of the other fields.
DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING A THREE-FIVE PAGE SUMMARY OF A JOURNAL ARTICLE/BOOK CHAPTER

It is important for you to learn from your instructor; it is also important for you to realize that your instructor is not the sole authority for understanding the tradition you are studying. Research is not infallible revelation; it is respectful conversation.

(20 pts)

Goal: Demonstrate what you have learned from the library and apply it to your own work. Show that you can learn by reading.

17. Create a file – on your computer – labeled: 384_Final_YourLastName
18. Revise and insert your proposal (1 pg) 5 pts
19. Revise and insert your Benjamin summary (3-5 pgs) 5 pts
20. Insert a subtitle against the left margin, using the following format, immediately following the last paragraph of your summary of Benjamin:

Barbara Green, “The Determination of Pharaoh” (1998)

Content

Topic Paragraph 3 pts

21. The topic sentence in the first paragraph should begin with a sentence using the format: “According to Barbara Green, The Determination of Pharaoh (1998)...”

22. State clearly how the author of the article or the book chapter would answer the question that you raised in your proposal.

Supporting Arguments 4 pts
23. Explain everything your reader needs to know to understand the author of the article or the book chapter’s response to your question.

24. Summary only what you have learned from the article or book chapter that helps you with your own research. Do not just summarize everything you have learned, just those things that are useful.

**Final Paragraph 3 pts**

25. Apply what you have learned from the article or book chapter to the question that you raised in your proposal. Base these conclusions on the summary paragraphs that precede it.

26. Write a good, clear, strong concluding paragraph restating how the author would answer your question, and what are the key elements in the author's argument.

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**SAMPLE THREE-FIVE PAGE SUMMARY OF A JOURNAL ARTICLE/BOOK CHAPTER**

**Good Treatment for Good Deeds**

*(Ruth 2:1-23)*

Your Name Here (class number here)

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Ruth wants Boaz to give her a child so that Naomi can be restored. Ruth asks Boaz to cover her with his cloak which is another way of saying she wishes to have sexual intercourse with him. A cloak is a way of describing a husband’s wing. When Boaz extends his hospitality to Ruth, he is covering her with his wings. This is another way of saying that by covering her with his wings, he will have sexual intercourse with her which will result in a child. By having a child Naomi and Ruth will be persevering widows.

Even though the parable leaves the audience with a question, the parable also gives an answer. The parable questions whether being a foreigner is a blessing or a cure, in the end shows to be a blessing. Ruth and Naomi are blessed with children, therefore making them persevering widows. The parable shows that by being a welcoming person, the good deed will be rewarded. Boaz is portrayed similar to Yahweh, in that he welcomes all people and does not judge. This story shows how important hospitality was in the time of the Bible.

Basil A Rebera, “Yahweh or Boaz: Ruth 2:20 Reconsidered” (1985)

According to Basil A Rebera, “Yahweh or Boaz: Ruth 2:20 Reconsidered” (1985) in semitic languages such as Hebrew, pronouns are considered elements and can not be interpreted by themselves. It should be translated with the use of other word elements. There is
usually a lack of specific reference and there is usually more than one reference which the pronoun can be referring to. This proposes two problems, one is absence and the other is ambiguity.

It is important to understand how others have interpreted the Book of Ruth before deciding on a conclusion as to why Boaz has shown such kindness towards Ruth. Beginning with how others view certain references in the Book of Ruth, such as the reference to *aser, hesed*, and phrases such as “the living and the dead”. By understanding these different interpretations, it could help clear up the ambiguity as to why Boaz is kind to Ruth.

When Ruth returns from the fields and tells Naomi how kind Boaz had been to her, Naomi proposed a blessing. Here is where ambiguity can be seen, by not translating the Hebrew form correctly, it can change the entire meaning of the verse. There are two problems in Ruth 2:20. The blessing Naomi offers is *baruk hu layhwh* blessed be he by Yahweh *aser lo azab hasdo et hahayyim we’et hammetim* who has not withheld his *hesed* with the living and the dead (Rebera 1985: 317). The problems are one the use of the word *aser* and second who is it that does *hesed* with the living and the dead, it could be Yahweh or Boaz.

The use of the phrase “*hesed* with the living and the dead”, could refer to Boaz since it is generally thought that it is only humans who can show *hesed* to the living and the dead. There is a parallel example in 2
Samuel where David shows *hesed* to King Saul by giving him a burial. Furthermore, if Yahweh was the one who is doing *hesed*, this would be the only time in the Old Testament where this has happened.

There are other arguments that believe *hesed* can be performed by the divine such as Yahweh. These people feel that if *hesed* can be done by humans, the most certainly Yahweh can do such a thing. There are also other arguments that the “living and the dead” is a general term that encompasses everyone. The statement of “the living” by Naomi refers to everyone also, not just the women themselves and the reasoning for this revolves around the work *hahayyim* which is a masculine plural form, and had there been reference to the women themselves they would have used a feminine plural form.

Since there are arguments for both Yahweh and Boaz as the doer of *hesed*, it is hard to choose which is the correct, however most content the doer is Yahweh. Boaz’s actions are not conforming and his responsibility to Ruth is generally one for a poor person.

Ruth feels that Boaz’s generosity in the field with extra gleaning does not have the meaning of supplying a need that could not have been met. Legal action could have been taken on Boaz had he not allowed Ruth to glean in his field. Ruth observes Yahweh’s actions of *hesed* with others such as Abraham. The general feeling of the blessing by Naomi is that it was an action of Yahweh for her to be in Boaz’s fields. It was
Yahweh who brought motion to these events that will lead to the resolution of the widows or the “dead”. Ruth is in denial when she returns to Bethlehem with Naomi. Yahweh see that Ruth is deserving of hesed and therefore guides her to Boaz’s fields.

There are arguments, however that show Boaz as the doer of hesed. The meaning of the word aser, “who”, should be looked at in this type formula, aser + verb + object = hesed (Rebera 1985: 319). There is a parallel in the book of Samuel (2 Sam 2.5), again which supports this type of formula. This helps to answer the question in Naomi’s blessing, ha or “he” which is the antecedent of the work aser or “who” leads to the question of who are the true beneficiaries of the action, of which Naomi has deemed to be hesed. This also leads to another question which is, who does Naomi refer to when she speaks of “the living” and “the dead”?

One idea is that Naomi’s idea of hesed is just a general principal idea. When Naomi makes the utterance about specific information regarding the identity of the person who let Ruth glean does not call for a general statement. Furthermore it is implied that the phrase “the dead” is referring to her dead sons and husband. When the phrase “the living” is used, it is considered general, as previously stated, if it was referring to the women there would have been to use of the feminine plural form in stead of the masculine plural form. However there are other places in the
Bible that the masculine form is used when referring to female duos. *Hayyim* must be thought of as a generic idea that applies to living human of both sexes. There are a few places in the Bible where this idea has remained, Ruth is one of those places.

The phrase “the living” then must refer to the two women, Naomi and Ruth and “the dead” refers to the dead husbands and sons of the two women. The question of who should receive the *hesed* undoubtedly must be the living and dead relatives of Naomi’s family. This makes Boaz more likely than Yahweh to give the *hesed* for the living and dead.

When Boaz and Ruth have their first meeting in the field, Ruth feels the only reason he is allowing her to glean is because he is following the law. Then it is obvious that the acts of Boaz go above and beyond what is expected under the law. He does not see her as a burden but a member of the covenant community and she is seeking refuge under Yahweh’s wings. Boaz is aware of the relationship in which *hesed* is appropriately performed and this exists between himself as with Ruth and Naomi. The actions of Boaz are that of *hesed*.

The question of *aser* or “who” is undoubtedly Boaz since there are several places in the Bible where this phrase is used to refer to one other than Yahweh such as 2 Samuel 2.5, Genesis 24.27 and at various places in the book of Ruth. The places where *aser* is discussed in 2 Samuel can be considered a parallel, and is a causal connection is implied. In Ruth
however, there are five places where the actions of the beneficiary require invocation of some divine favor.

_Hesed_ can also apply to relationship rights and some duties between certain family members. This idea can be applied to the relationship between Naomi and Boaz. If Naomi knew Boaz’s relationship to her family, then it makes sense for her to attribute _hesed_ actions that describe Boaz. Naomi is shocked when Ruth returns home with the grain that she begins asking Ruth a number of questions such as where she was gleaning and where she was working. Before Ruth can respond, Naomi is invoking a blessing on whomever it was that allowed Ruth to glean.

Ruth answers Naomi that it was Boaz who allowed her to glean in his field at this point Naomi invokes a second blessing. However this blessing takes on a different meaning. If a man in general allowed Ruth to glean, he would have been following traditional custom, however since it was Boaz _hesed_ that was conducted can not be linked to a stranger in the first blessing. It can be considered that it is Boaz and not Yahweh that is referred to as _aser_ and Yahweh that is actually doing the _hesed_.

The Bible has been translated many times over and the meaning or certain words are often changed or interpreted differently through the versions. Biblical translations such as the King James Version, the Revised Standard Version and others feel that Yahweh acts as the
referent. The New English Bible and New International Version have changed some meanings in Ruth to make Yahweh the sole subject of aser.

The United Bible Society Translator’s Handbook considers Yahweh to be the correct referent of aser. Others, however, consider Boaz to be the referent --- Boaz, and not Yahweh, is hesed and the subject of aser.

Nonetheless, Boaz shows kindness to Ruth because he is acting as Yahweh would. It is obvious that aser refers to Boaz and that he is also performing hesed, which is an act of Yahweh. Boaz is not only doing his legal obligation by allowing Ruth to glean but he is also acting as Yahweh by showing kindness toward a stranger and by allowing her to extend her stay in his field. Having examined these ideas of interpretation, meanings and references, has helped make the story much clearer and more intriguing. Boaz was once considered a typical gentleman by today’s standards, however in the world of the Bible, it was obvious he was much more. He was the father of a household fulfilling his legal responsibilities to the widow, the orphan and the stranger. He was also hesed -- acting as Yahweh acts.
Further Reading


Overseers are portrayed as confused and apologetic. For example, Ruth leaves the field as Boaz is arriving. Boaz instructs Ruth on the rules for gleaning in his field such as do not glean in another field, work with the other women, feel free to drink the water and finally the men shall not molest you. It is clear from the last instruction that the men have done something to make her uncomfortable and embarrassed. This suggests that he is showing kindness to Ruth but he is also protecting her from the men who are sexually harassing her in the fields.


Aser in Hebrew means “who”. When Naomi makes a blessing it is unclear “whom” she is blessing: Yahweh or Boaz. The blessing could be meant for either.. Naomi could have meant the blessing for Yahweh but because of the haste of the casual conversation phrased it in an ambiguous way. The blessing could have been meant got Boaz because he possesses features of Yahweh. Therefore, the kindness that Boaz shows to Ruth is really the kindness of Yahweh blessing Ruth and Naomi with land and children.


The phrase “gleaning” offers up the idea that gleaning was not part of the harvest because according to the legal requirement, there should be something left for widows to glean, offering the idea that gleaning was not in fact part of the harvest. The phrase “young women” suggests that the women work for Boaz as servants to the harvesters, Boaz tells Ruth to follow them, implying she is below the servant women. Three ideas come from this thought, men worked the harvest, women picked up the stocks and the widows gleaned the field. This idea suggests that Boaz
was kind to Ruth because, one it was part of the legal requirement and two gleaning is the job of widows only.


Naomi offers a blessing to the man who allowed Ruth to glean, however a major question is raised. It is unclear if Naomi is offering the blessing to Boaz or Yahweh, in Hebrew the work aser means “who” but in the many translations of the Bible, the meaning has been interpreted many ways. Rebera feels confident that aser is in reference to Yahweh, while the reading from Collins considers aser to be in reference to Boaz, however the true identity of the beneficiary is open to interpretation, and there are supporting arguments for both Yahweh and for Boaz. The blessing could be to Boaz since there are parallels of aser meaning in other biblical stories that refer to an individual other than Yahweh, however in other biblical translations the work aser undoubtedly refers to Yahweh. It is important to understand who the blessing is directed to so the audience will understand why Boaz shows such kindness towards Ruth.


When Boaz instructs Ruth to stay in his field for others might cause her harm, originally the phrase “to harm” was translated as “to molest”. The fields are a place for unattached foreign women and therefore the potential sexual violence can be considered, this is where the word ‘molest’ would be appropriate. It could be considered that Boaz was not only showing kindness to Ruth, but also protecting her from the sexual predators of the other fields.
Project 2
Directed Research Report

Project 2 includes a ten-slide PowerPoint presentation of one assigned reading (20%); a 3-5 page day-in-life story using Benjamin and five journal articles (20%); an annotated reading list of five titles from the American Theological Library Association database (30%). Directions and samples for each of these projects are posted on Blackboard in the Assignments folder. PowerPoints are a widely used format for presentations. Being able to compose a PowerPoint teaches you how to identify the thesis of an article, and how to summarize clearly the author’s supporting arguments. As you can see from the samples in the Course Documents folder on Blackboard Day-in-the-Life stories are not simply fantasies. Writing of this sort is responsible academic exercise that requires a strong knowledge base about the time period, a keen sense of place, and excellent writing skills, descriptive and narrative.

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPOSING A TEN-SLIDE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Goal: Explain and illustrate an assigned reading using PowerPoint

1. Sign up for an assigned reading.
2. Read carefully to select nine concepts the assigned reading presents. Subtitles and topic sentences help identify important concepts.
3. Create a PowerPoint presentation on your computer. Use the following samples to title your PowerPoint file:
   Author_pages_YourLastName (Benjamin_35-58_YourLastName)
4. Use Insert tab to put a number on each slide.
5. Use Replace fonts feature under the Format tab to change the default font to Comic sans MS.
6. Follow the template for PowerPoint in Assignments folder on Blackboard.
7. Put one, and only one, concept on each slide.
8. You can use Google images to locate pictures. You may wish to use materials from on-line libraries and museums (British Museum, Louvre Museum, Vatican Museum, Pergamum Museum, Metropolitan Museum, Boston Museum of Fine Art, Oriental
Institute), or from Art Resource. Use only fine art or archaeological artifacts; do not use clip-art.

9. Be sure to check the size of the image file. Highlight the file, then right click and choose Properties. The image should be no larger than 72KB. If it is larger, you need to open in the image in a program like Adobe Photoshop, then open the File tab and Save For the Web which will convert the image from .gif or other formats to .jpeg and reduce the size to 72 KB.

10. Submit your PowerPoint presentation to the Assignments folder on Blackboard no later than 9:00 AM the day before your assigned reading is scheduled. I will edit and return it to your Assignments folder on Blackboard before class. Use my comments to revise your PPT before your class presentation.

SAMPLE TEN-SLIDE POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

Before submitting your PowerPoint Presentation, compare it with the sample PPT presentation in the Assignments folder on Blackboard.

DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING AN ABSTRACT OF A JOURNAL ARTICLE OR BOOK CHAPTER

Goal: Abstract Five Articles or Book Chapters

Search Strategy

24. Log on the homepage for the Hayden Library at ASU. You can do this from a terminal on campus, or on-line. If you go to the Hayden Library there are librarians who can help you trouble shoot technical problems or strategy problems. Click on the “Find” link, and then the “Alphabetical list of electronic resources” link. Start by using: AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

25. Sign in.

26. Search only for material in English.

27. Create sets that search for articles and books on any archaeological topic connected with your assigned section of Benjamin 2003, e.g. “Shiloh”, “Dagon” or “ark of the covenant” from the Stories of Samuel (1 Sam 1:1—8:3).

E-mailing the Searches
28. Check off hits in each search and then e-mail them to yourself.
29. Some databases do not allow you to e-mail hits, so you will need to block/select, copy and then paste each hit into a Word file.
30. If you e-mail yourself the results, open the e-mail, block the contents, and paste it into a single Microsoft Word file.
31. Create one file of five hits. **Omit all duplicates, book reviews, poems and sermons.**

**Finding Copies of the Five Articles or Book Chapters**

32. Log on the homepage for the Hayden Library at ASU. You can do this from a terminal on campus or off campus on-line. If you are off campus, be sure to sign in.
33. Click on “Catalog” link in the red banner at the top of the Hayden Library homepage.
34. Click on the link for the “journal” or “book” template, and enter bibliographic information from the list you received from me in class.
35. If the article or book is at Hayden Library, note the call number where you can find it.
36. If the article or book is not at Hayden Library, go back to the homepage.
37. Click on “Services” link in the red banner at the top of the page.
38. Click on the “Interlibrary Loan (ILL)” link and fill in the personal, and then the bibliographic information for the article or chapter.
39. After you have submitted an ILL request, be sure to check each week on-line at this location to see if your book or article has been received. If you have not received your material within two weeks, go to the ILL desk in Hayden Library and follow up on your request in person.
40. If you need more information on the article or book, click on the “Indexes” link in the red banner at the top of the Hayden Library homepage. Go to the ATLA database and search for the MARC record for the article. “ATLA” for the name of the database. ATLA is the abbreviation for the database of books and articles published, which is compiled by the American Theological Library Association.

**Writing Abstracts for Each Article or Book Chapter**
41. Create a file on your hard drive with the title: 394_Abstracts_YourLastName
42. Insert revised proposal here
43. Use class discussion of your PowerPoint to revise it and convert it into a 3-5 page written summary of the article or chapter, and insert it here.
44. Insert a page break, and center “Further Reading” in Times New Roman 18 pt font at the top of the new page.
45. Write a one paragraph abstract for each article or book chapter with no less than five sentences, and not more than ten sentences.
46. Write the abstract without using phrases like: “The article says...” or “According to the article”
47. Write the abstract in the third person.
48. The first sentence in the abstract should be a strong, clear topic sentence stating the conclusion of the article or the book.
49. The following three sentences should summarize three arguments used to support the conclusion in the topic sentence.
50. The last sentence should apply the conclusion of the article to the biblical tradition. For example: “How does it enrich the understanding of the tradition?” (Note: This last sentence does not appear in the sample for this assignment!)

SAMPLE ABSTRACTS

Further Reading


The translation of the Samaritan Inscription from Tell Qasile is very important to understanding the phonetics and morphology of Samaritan Aramaic while it was still a spoken language. The inscription contains four lines and was originally translated as 1) Maximus (Deus), 2) Recognize the pierced one, 3) Destroy the enemy, and 4) Recognize the pierced one. However, line 3 contains a personal name and should be translated as “Proœnos.” Lines 2 and 4 are of particular interest and contain a fragment that is common in many dedicatory inscriptions and should be translated as “that he may be remembered.” These lines also contain a specific phenomenon of vernacular Aramaic that should be
pronounced *adqar*. This should be translated as “because he was esteemed.” Thus, the inscription should be translated as 1) Maximus, 2) be remembered, because he was honored, 3) Proxenos, and 4) be remembered, because he was honored.


Some notes and clarifications must be made regarding the structure excavated at Tell Qasile. Bulldozer destruction made it impossible to recreate the initial character of the structure, therefore, it was dated by the discovery of a coin of Mauricius Tiberius (586-602 C.E.), and the discovery of pottery identical to that found at other seventh century C.E. structures. The Greek word ϕωσιστηριω [φιω] appears in line five of the Greek inscription and was immediately translated by S. Applebaum as “lantern-window.” Dion and Plummer later translated this as a late Greek usage meaning “baptistry.” For translations relying purely upon photographic accounts, it should be noted that missing tesserae were replaced with white tesserae, specifically in the top of the “tau.” Furthermore, lines 2 and 4 of the Samaritan Inscription, which are the same, have been translated as Aramaic by a variety of scholars. However, if translated as plain Hebrew, they may be construed as a call to acknowledge Jesus, who was pierced on the cross.


The permanence of holy places to a particular culture is evidenced by the Stratum XII-X temples (12th –10th centuries BCE) of the Philistines at Tell Qasile. The Stratum XII temple consisted of a single 6.4 x 6.6 meter room constructed of mud-brick walls. A courtyard lay east and north of the temple, covered with dirt, ash, bones, and potsherds. The Stratum XI temple was built upon the ruins of the XII temple, extending to the east and north with the dimensions 7.75 x 8.5m. Numerous artifacts were discovered in the southwest corner of the temple, including hundreds of faience beads, clay statuettes, a cosmetic box, many small offering bowls, and a life size clay mask. A small shrine west of the temple, containing the holy of holies, was discovered in Stratum XI. Stratum X is a refurbishment and enlargement of Stratum XI, with a new anteroom added in place of the east wall. A house was discovered to the south of the temple that could have housed inhabitants of high rank possibly belonging to the temple priesthood due to the wealth of Philistine jars and imported Egyptian vessels discovered inside.

From 1982-1984, three excavation seasons were carried out at Tell Qasile with the purpose of widening and deepening excavation areas, and verifying the stratigraphic record. Of interest from Stratum XII is a three-walled structure that contained a free-standing hearth. The hearth was a 1.6 m long oval that was 0.6 m high, and contained a depression full of white ash. It is the only known discovery of a free-standing hearth in a Bronze or Iron age dwelling in Palestine and is indicative of foreign architecture. In Stratum XI, the “Hearth Room” continued to exist unchanged, however, a structure characteristic of Stratum XI building techniques was found built in the southern part of the room. In Stratum X, the area was rebuilt and replanned, likely resulting from decay or internal initiative, since no evidence of destruction was found. Important discoveries include a fragment of an “Ashdoda” figurine holding a baby—evidence of Mycenaean tradition in the Philistine culture. Also, a conch shaped jug was found in the “Hearth Room” that is unique to Tell Qasile and found nowhere else. These excavation seasons revealed more of the Philistine traditions of the XII-X strata.


The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has had a profound effect on the understanding of the Bible and on theology itself. The discovery of two thousand year old manuscripts that differed with the current accepted form at first produced cries of vulgarity from many corners. However these supposedly “vulgar” deviations from accepted scripture were much more carefully preserved than more familiar forms, revealing their importance to those alive during the infant stages of Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. They cannot be considered radical sectarian variants, as they were largely imported from elsewhere and do not contain and “sectarian” variants. The deviations of the scrolls from the Masoretic Text show that it was not the preferred version of those in antiquity as we had previously believed. This has had an effect on translations today, as most of them now state the textual basis for their work. The discovery of the scrolls has had a marked change in theology, as the existence of a version of the Bible a thousand years older than the previous version has opened up new channels of inquiry into biblical scholarship and the origins of biblical texts.

DIRECTIONS FOR WRITING A DAY-IN-THE-LIFE STORY
Goal: Demonstrate that you can think critically about what you have heard in class, and what you have read.

Creating a Storyteller (5 pts)

1. Choose just one of the biblical traditions discussed by Benjamin in the chapter assigned for the day of your PowerPoint presentation. For example, choose Deborah Delivers Israel from Hazor (Judg 4:12-16), not the Saga of Deborah and Jael (Judg 4:1—5:31) or the Books of Joshua-Judges (Josh 1:1—Judg 21:25)
2. Make a list of the characters in the biblical tradition, and then either choose one to be your storyteller, or create and name an additional character. For example, your storyteller could be Lappidoth, the husband of Deborah (Judg 4:4) or a warrior, whom you have named “Eleazar” who went with Barak to meet Deborah (Judg 4:4:4-9).
3. The character you have created will be the narrator in your story, and can speak in the first person.

Using Your Story to Explain Mazar and Benjamin (15 pts)

4. Your story is basically a day in the life of the storyteller you have created. Start when the storyteller wakes, and end when the storyteller goes to sleep.
5. Make a list of seven items from one article you abstracted and from Benjamin that you want to include in the day’s events.
6. Incorporate each item in the list into your day-in-the-life of your storyteller. Document each use.
   a. For example, “As I left my household, I took the duckbill axe which belonged to my father’s father. Men all over the northern region of Syria-Palestine used axes in peace and in war. The blade was forged from an elongated piece of bronze shaped like the bill of a duck with two elliptical holes and a shaft for the handle. (Mazar 1992:184-185)”
   b. For example, “As I followed Barak into the village of Deborah, I saw her sitting beneath a palm tree. Her veil did not completely cover the flaming red hair for which she was famous. Everyone called her the “woman of fire”. Yahweh had marked Deborah with that striking mane of hair to identify her as a hero who would free the Hebrews from slavery. (Benjamin 2004:146)”
7. Samples of Day-in-the-Life Stories (See Course Documents folder on Blackboard)

Style (5 pts)

8. On your hard drive title the file: 384_Story_YourLastName
9. Center the title of your story on the first page. Use an 18 pt Times New Roman font.
10. Use a 12 pt Time New Roman font for you name and for the rest of the assignment.
11. Center your name under the title, and put the class identification number in parenthesis after your name.
12. Use only your own words to explain the Bible, Benjamin and the article or chapter.
13. Use “Yahweh” or “divine patron”, not “Lord”, “God” or “gods”.
14. Use “household”, not “family”.
15. Use “slave”, not “servant”.
16. Use “Syria-Palestine”, not “Holy Land” or “Canaan”.
17. Write inclusively. Use “people”, not “men”.
18. The story needs to be 3-5 pages in length. Three pages is three full pages and one sentence on the fourth page, not two full pages and one sentence on the third page.
19. Double space the story.
20. Insert page numbers.

SAMPLE WRITING A DAY-IN-THE-LIFE STORY

The Home Front
Your Name Here (class identification number)
It was still dark when Hannah awoke, and no one else in the household was awake. Deborah, the wife of Lapidoth, older brother to Hannah’s husband Jacob had awoken earlier, but she had already left the household. She had a special job to do today. All of the women of the village used to envy Deborah because she had such beautiful red hair. When Deborah began to deliver messages from Yahweh they realized that her red hair did more than make her beautiful; it was a sign that Yahweh had a special purpose for her (Benjamin 2003: 146).

Deborah used to be the one to prepare food for the household, but ever since she became a prophet of Yahweh, Hannah had taken over her household duties. Now it was Hannah’s duty to wake before the household to ensure that everyone would be fed. Once she was fully awake, Hannah climbed down the ladder into the courtyard and began preparing the days bread for the rest of the household. She built a fire in the bottom of the clay oven, and then she prepared the dough from the flour she had ground the day before. Once she had finished preparing the dough, the fire had burned down, leaving the hot coals in the bottom of the oven. Hannah placed the dough on the inside walls of the domed clay oven to bake (Mazar 1992: 488).

Other members of the household were beginning to wake and Hannah could hear them stirring upstairs. She began to set out food because all the members of the household would soon come down for
their morning meal. There was a sense of dread slowly growing in the pit of Hannah’s stomach. This morning, Deborah waited for the warriors so that she could give them the Yahweh’s instructions. The elders had finally sent out a call to arms to all the neighboring villages (Benjamin 2003: 146). The elders had been reluctant to assemble an army, but the villages could no longer bear the weight of King Jabin’s oppression.

There was a sense of anticipation as the household gathered for the morning meal. This would be no ordinary day. Instead of going into the fields to begin the spring planting, the men of the household would join the other warriors at the Palm of Deborah. The weapons that they would carry into battle lay next to the door: spears with iron spearheads. Hannah had heard that men used to carry weapons made of bronze into battle, but these iron weapons were much stronger. When she thought of iron she thought of strength (Mazar 1992: 507-508).

Yet this morning, everyone in the household knew that the iron weapons would be useless. They had heard that the Hyksos warriors rode chariots into battle, and the iron weapons that lay next to the door seemed feeble in the face of such an enemy (Benjamin 2003: 146). The Israelite villages had herded and farmed under the oppression of these men in chariots for too long, but Deborah had promised that Yahweh would finally deliver them. This morning, they did not put our trust in
the strength of their men or in the strength of their iron weapons. They put their trust in a red haired woman.

After they had eaten, the men gathered their weapons and left for the Palm of Deborah. Hannah had only time to quickly reassure her husband that Yahweh would take watch over him. She did not have the luxury of a long good-bye. There was still work to do. Today the women had to do their own chores and the chores that the men usually did. The sheep and the goats were becoming restless in the low passageways between the pillars (Mazar 1992: 485). Normally Hannah’s daughter Sarah and Deborah’s daughter Naomi milked the animals before taking them to the hills to graze, but this morning there were no men to clean out the animal pens. Instead, Hannah milked them as quickly as she could while the two girls cleaned out the animal pens.

When Hannah was finished milking, Sarah and Naomi took the herd down to the well outside of village. Their ancestors had built this well, cutting a tunnel from an underground spring so that the water would flow into this well (Mazar 1992: 480-481). Hannah accompanied the girls so that she could get the household’s water for the day. Other women from the village were gathered at the well. It was always a place for the women of the village to exchange news. This morning, every woman’s mind was on her father, husband, brother or son who had left for the Palm of Deborah this morning.
Hannah overheard one woman say, “Did you hear? Barak refused to go into battle without Deborah!” While it was unheard of for a woman to lead an army into battle, Hannah found comfort in the thought. Deborah had been chosen by Yahweh; she was marked. With Yahweh’s favor, the army she led could not lose, not even to an army on chariots.

The girls took the herd to graze in the hills near village. Hannah worked in the courtyard of the household grinding all of the grains that she would use to prepare the household’s food for the day. She worked at the heavy basalt grinding stone that this household had used for generations (Mazar 1992: 488). Though today was no ordinary day, Hannah ground the grain as if it was. She measured out the amount of grain that she would need for the evening meal and the bread for the next morning. She prepared enough for a full household. She had to live today as if tomorrow would be like every other day. To do less would show that she did not have faith in Yahweh.

Normally Hannah would have the company of her mother-in-law Rebecca while she worked. They would gossip, sing songs and tell each other stories while they worked. Hannah looked over at the loom where Rebecca often worked. It was made of stone and bone spindle whorls and it had clay weights (Mazar 1992: 491). The cloth that she wove not only clothed all the members of the household, but they also sold the cloth to buy other household goods like olive oil and wine. But today Rebecca
was needed elsewhere. With the men gone, even cloth-making seemed like a luxury task that the household could do without.

After the noon meal, Hannah began preparing the evening meal. The afternoon was as silent and tense as the morning had been. Hannah was thankful for all of the work that she had to do today because it kept her mind off of the men of her household. The shadows began to grow long across the courtyard. Hannah was expecting the girls to return soon with the herd. The men usually returned home about the same time. Hannah was growing more tense as time passed. She was reluctant to set out the evening meal, but she could put it off no longer. She began to place food in the orange-red pottery that had come from potters in Jerusalem during more affluent times. Her silence was suddenly broken by a child yelling, “Mamma, Mamma! They’re back! They’re back!”

Hannah’s five-year-old son Caleb came running into the household proclaiming the good news. Hannah hurries out the door of the household. She sees the girls near the village gate with the herd, but they are not returning home. They talk excitedly with other young girls returning with their herds. When they see Hannah, they hurry the herd back toward the household. Hannah reaches the village gate where other women are beginning to gather and follows their gaze. The warriors are slowly approaching the village. They are definitely Hebrew warriors, since
they are not armored like the armies of the great nations. In front of the army, she could see Deborah’s red hair.

Hannah runs back into the household where the girls are just securing the herd into the household. “Come, help me with this. Your fathers will be hungry and thirsty.” Hannah fills a bowl with milk and the girls run it outside to the warriors, careful not to spill it. Hannah finishes setting out the evening meal. Deborah, Lapidoth, and Jacob entered the household. After they had washed the grime from the battlefield from their bodies, the household gave thanks and sat down for the evening meal.

Everyone in the village was exhausted: the men from battle and the women from their heavy workload at home. But tonight was a night for celebration. Hannah followed the rest of her household to the village gate. Deborah and Barak stood before the assembled people. After offering up a prayer of thanksgiving, Deborah began to sing a song recounting the events of the day’s battle. The song was a hymn of praise to Yahweh, and it reminded the people that when they are faithful, Yahweh will deliver them: “Then was the remnant made victor over the mighty, Yahweh’s people won my victory over the warriors” (Judges 5:13). She sang of the army’s victory at Taanach, and of Jael killing Sisera after he had asked for water. But this song was not a typical battle song. Deborah’s song celebrated the women who had delivered Israel today
(Benjamin 2003: 152). Deborah and Jael are Israel’s mothers, acting selflessly to protect their households. As she listened to the song, Hannah thought of the other mothers of Israel, the ones that Deborah did not mention in her song. Hannah thought of the women like herself who stayed behind maintaining the households that the warriors fought to protect. A shiver ran up Hannah’s spine as Deborah sang of Sisera’s mother who waited for her son to return ho with Hebrew wombs as a prize. Hannah had been too busy with the days chores to allow herself to think of her own vulnerability, but Deborah’s song reminded Hannah of the fate Yahweh had delivered her from that day.
Further Reading

Ackerman, Susan 2003 “Digging Up Deborah: Recent Hebrew Bible Scholarship on Gender and the Contribution to Archaeology.” Near Eastern Archaeology 66: 172-183.

Contends that much of the feminist contribution to biblical studies has had a literary focus, but archaeology is able to reconstruct the lives of women in the biblical time, thus shedding light on women’s issues raised in the bible. Carol Meyer’s work on the Iron Age I “four-room” house demonstrated that the household was the major center for production and women therefore played important roles not only in the economic arena, but also in the political and the religious arenas. Though Judges did not reach its final form for more than five hundred years after the Iron Age I period, it does depict an Iron Age I society, and thus women are depicted as functioning in a number of important roles. Judges depicts women such as Deborah and Jael as significantly contributing to Israel’s military campaigns. Judges also depicts women who serve important religious roles, as Deborah serves as a religious authority and women sing songs to celebrate Yahweh’s victories in battle. Women wielded enormous power as the bread makers of society, and the biblical record reflects this power, though negatively, when Jeremiah condemns the women who bake cakes for the Queen of Heaven. Women also contributed to the economy as weavers, and again, the biblical record reflects the importance of this contribution, though negatively, as the Deuteronomist author of 2 Kings condemns the women who weave garments for Asherah’s statue. (2 Kgs ??:??)


Argues the male biblical storytellers employ female characters to uphold the storytellers’ androcentric views. Barak and Sisera both act unmanly because they seek the shelter of women in battle, and Deborah and Jael’s victory shames the men, thus reinforcing the male storytellers’ ideals of manhood. Though Deborah and Jael are both praised as mothers because they act to protect their “children,” the people of Israel, Deborah and Jael also represent the male storytellers’ anxieties of motherhood. Deborah sends her children into a battle in which many of them will die, and Jael acts as a mother to lull Sisera into sleep, then kills him. As the male storytellers depict Sisera’s mother as looking
forward to the spoils of war her son will bring home, she becomes a mouthpiece for the storytellers, implicitly given approval for patriarchal warfare.


Contends with archaeologists who have accounted for the popularity of the pillared house by simply citing its utility in an agrarian economy, and instead argues that it is necessary to account for the social and religious functions the house may have served. The pillared house was ubiquitous in Iron Age Israel, serving as a design for rural houses, for urban houses and also for monumental structures such as temples. The house was highly functional for rural households in which the central courtyard was used as a space to process agricultural materials, but this does not explain its use for urban houses and monumental structures. The pillared house reflects Israel’s egalitarian values. Unlike hierarchical buildings in which, upon entering, one must pass through rooms successively, making some rooms less accessible than others, upon entering the pillared house, one has equal access to each of the rooms. The pillared house also makes Israel’s purity laws possible since an unclean person, such as a menstruating woman, would be able to reside in one of the rooms of the house while still remaining separate from the other members of the household. The other members of the household could avoid the room with the unclean person while still having access to all the other rooms in the house. The pillared house reflects Israel’s ideas of holiness in which classes of things should not be mixed. The pillared house design thus became the dominant architectural design for all Israelite buildings.


Makes the case that in Judges 4 and 5, Deborah and Jael’s actions reverse many of the audiences’ readers expectations, particularly about gender roles, but these reversals do not necessarily subvert the patriarchal social system, but rather justify the violence within that system. (Judg 4-5) When Sisera enters Jael’s tent, he can only perceive of women acting within the patriarchal roles as mothers and lovers, but Jael plays on Sisera’s assumptions. She acts as both a mother and lover to lure Sisera into a false sense of security, but then reverses the role, becoming a kind of rapist, as she penetrates Sisera’s mouth with a tent peg. The Song of Deborah in Judges 5 celebrates Jael’s act of violence,
and by doing so, the song justifies Jael’s actions, and by extension, Israel’s war against the Canaanites. Deborah is celebrated as the “Mother of Israel,” but the song reverses the typically nurturing image of motherhood. (Judg 5) Instead Deborah is the harsher mother who compels her children to fight for their freedom. She follows the model of motherhood that exerts authority over men in a patriarchal world, the mother-son relationship. Though the Song of Deborah praises both Deborah and Jael, it does not depict typical Israelite women during battle, who must either rely on their men to protect them during battle, or failing that, must become the spoils of war for the victorious enemy. The song does give a glimpse of this world when it depicts Sisera’s mother waiting at home for him, but instead of revealing sympathy for the vulnerable woman in a time of war, Sisera’s mother instead becomes a vehicle to further justify violence. Sisera sets out to capture a woman’s womb as the spoils of war, but is instead captured by that womb.


Argues that the woman warrior is a liminal figure who can be interpreted in a number of ways to support the ideology of the interpreter. The woman warrior is an internal metaphor, in which woman is equated with warrior, and also an external metaphor, in which woman is to the human domain what the warrior is to the human domain. Since warrior is defined as male, the metaphors require that the woman take on masculine characteristics while retaining feminine characteristics, and she is thus liminal, existing on the margins of society. The biblical storytellers employed the metaphor of the woman warrior to reinscribe norms of manliness. The women warrior shames the men that act “unmanfully;” Deborah shames Barak when he refuses to go into battle without her and Jael shames Sisera when he deserts a battle and seeks shelter in her tent. Modern evangelical women have reconciled Deborah as a woman warrior by seeing her not a “pushy broad,” but instead a woman supporting a man in his leadership role. Nineteenth century feminists were unable to reconcile Jael as a woman warrior, assuming that as a woman she was obligated to offer hospitality, but her actions as warrior violated that code of hospitality.