

Alliance Theological Seminary

OT 504.NA Hebrew Bible in the Eastern Mediterranean World

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Mondays 6:15 - 9:10 PM

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Final Examination

Part One: Short Answer

Directions: Identify each of the following

1. threshing floor

The threshing floor is a large, flat, and centrally located space in the villages of ancient Israel where threshing activities are carried out. It is a significant liminal and communal space where negotiations, legal transactions and communal planning takes place.

2. Bethulah

Bethulah is a Hebrew word used in the Bible when referring to “virgin”, or more accurately a marriageable woman whose virginity is under the protection of her father’s household and represents the honor of the household. A bethulah bears political, social and economic implications. She symbolizes a legal guarantee of land and children.

3. Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia is a historical region located within the Tigris and Euphrates river system. It is one of the earliest civilizations of the world. Before the fall of Babylon, it was dominated by the Sumerians and Akkadians.

4. Meribaal

Meribaal is the crippled son of Jonathan, also known as Mephibosheth. After David ascended the throne, he granted the land of Saul to Meribaal and allowed him to eat at his table. Meribaal was accused by his servant Siba of betraying David during Absalom’s rebellion, which he later denied.

5. patrilocal

Patrilocal is a marriage practice in which the newly married couple resides with the husband’s household. Patrilocal was the practice of ancient Israel.

6. Tanak

It is the Jewish canonical collection of text of which Christians call the Old Testament Bible. תנ"ך is an acronym representing the three main parts of the book: ת-תורה (The Torah), נ-נביאים (Prophets), and כ-כתובים (writings).

7. Concubinage

Concubinage is the practice of keeping a concubine. In ancient Israel, the concubine is often a female slave owned by a household who bore children for it. She is a second-class wife but enjoyed certain legal rights. It is possible for her son to become an heir.

8. midwife

A midwife is a woman who provides assistance and negotiates covenants during the entire child-bearing process. In the ANE, her job includes preparing the child-bearer and the room for intercourse, certifying pregnancy, facilitating the laboring process, initiating respiration, cutting the umbilical cord, negotiating the adoption of the newly born, responding to any crisis or trauma, and more.

9. herem

Herem is the Hebrew word used in the book of Joshua to depict a state of total destruction after a city is being captured.

10. Monarchy

A monarchy is a government body with a king or monarch as its head of power. In ancient Israel, when the land and children of the village culture was constantly being threatened, a state was formed to centralize power in the hands of a monarch, who formed a standing army, regulated the production and distribution of goods, negotiated covenants with foreign countries, promulgated codes of law, and developed infrastructure and education.

11. Patriarchy

Patriarchy refers to a form of society in which power was held in the hands of men in a systematic manner. Women were largely excluded from the system of power.

12. Levirate marriage

Levirate marriage is a type of marriage that occurs when a husband dies without producing any offspring. The person next of kin to the deceased husband is responsible of marrying the widow in order to produce an heir for the deceased person.

13. Bronze Age

Bronze Age refers to the time period roughly between 3,300 to 1,200 BCE. In the Levant, it was a time when individual city states existed, at times under Egyptian dominance. Scholars believe that this is roughly the period when Biblical events up till the Book of Samuel took place.

14. Lmlk seal

Lmlk seals are ancient seals bearing the Hebrew letters LMLK. They are stamped on the handle of storage jars to indicate that they belong to the King. Scholars believe that these seals are issued during the reign of King Hezekiah.

15. goel

A goel is the “redeemer” or “legal guardian” who, being the next of kin to a deceased member of the household or clan, takes up that person’s responsibility to produce and raise an heir, to secure property within the household, to pay off debt, and to avenge the death of members within the group

16. matrilocal

Matrilocal is a marriage practice in which the newly married couple resides with the wife’s household and/or community.

17. Clan

A clan, or a “mishpaha” in Hebrew, is a group of several households bounded by kinship and marriage that lives in proximity. Members of a clan cooperate with each other economically and share traditions, customs, laws, ancestral stories and religion. There are clan elders who are responsible of settling conflicts and cases within the clan.

18. tribe

A tribe is a social unit above “clan” with members from the same geographical and kinship organization. The sons and grandsons of Jacob make up the twelve tribes of Israel. The tribe settles disputes between clans, shares traditions and religious practices, and offers protections to its members.

19. Anat

Anat is a Semetic war goddess popular among various ANE cultures. There are evidences showing that the worship of Anat also existed in ancient Israel. Shamgar, the son of Anat, is mentioned in the Book of Judges.

20. Tehom

Tehom (תהום) is a Hebrew word that means deep or abyss. It is used in the Bible in reference to a great and mysterious place of deepness.

Part Two: Answer the following: 100 words minimum

1. List the major themes of Chapter 13 in **Matthews and Benjamin in Social World of Ancient Israel 1250 - 587 BCE**. What are the major points of the chapter? How do these points impact on how you read the Bible? Pick one passage to illustrate this idea? Do you agree or disagree with Matthews? Why or why not?

The major theme of Chapter 13 is that the “virgin” in the Bible is different from what we understand in the modern world. In the Biblical world, the significance of a virgin not only comes from the absence of sexual activities; rather the focus is on the political connotation of her status as a “marriageable woman”. The virgin embodies the honor of the household. She reflects the ability of the father to feed and protect the household and is a legal guarantee of land and children. Her virginity is important because it makes her eligible to ratify a covenant for her father’s household with marriage. For this reason, rape can be a political maneuver that challenges the status and brings shame to the household of the victim by taking away her virginity and her honor.

The major points from this chapter affect how I read the Bible by explaining certain laws and regulations in the Torah that might seem extremely patriarchal otherwise. For example, modern readers might find Exodus 22:16-17 very disturbing, since it seems to force the victim to marry the rapist. However, with the social context illustrated by Matthews and Benjamin, we understand that the focus of this regulation is to protect the honor and bring economic compensation to the household of the victim. Similarly, from the reaction of Tamar towards Amnon (2 Samuel 13:1-14:33), we can see an emphasis on protecting the honor of the household as she firstly asks Amnon not to shame her and later grieves the loss of her virginity and the resulting change of her status. I agree with the main ideas of this chapter. It provides a reasonable explanation for many of the otherwise confusing texts in the OT where “virgin” is mentioned by clarifying the historical and social understanding of the term.

2. Summarize the major points in Chapter 4 of **Family in the Bible**. How do these points impact on your reading of the Wisdom Literature? Pick one theme that interests you and explain how it is treated in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 of Family in the Bible analyzes the outlook on family found in Wisdom Literature. It starts by explaining how Biblical wisdom refers to life skills

rather than pure intellectual knowledge. It is the ability to deal with various life circumstances, including that of family life. The main focus of this chapter is on the Book of Proverbs, where plenty of guidelines concerning parent-child and marriage relationships can be found. According to the author, Proverbs emphasizes the importance of a strong and cohesive family. Family is a place of education. Children should respect their parents' teaching while parents should discipline their children and be a godly model for them. In terms of marriage relationship, Proverbs warns readers to avoid immoral women, to pick a good wife carefully and to cultivate that relationship. The author suggests that these instructions also reflect divine realities, where readers are reminded to Choose YHWH over other deities. The right and wise choice will lead to life whereas the other way is foolish and leads to destruction. This chapter ends with a brief survey of "family" depicted in the books of Job, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. In general, these books also affirm the importance of good family relationships, especially in the midst of a suffering and chaotic world.

I really appreciate how the author explains Biblical wisdom as life skills that enable believers to navigate complicated situations in life. With this in mind, Wisdom Literature becomes a lot more practical and applicable. It also shows how the Bible deeply cares about human relationships, and provides us with guidelines to build healthy and strong relationships in life. I am particularly interested in the interpretation of the Song of Songs and the widely discussed issue of whether it should be read allegorically. In this Chapter, the author points out that if Song of Songs can indeed be categorized as wisdom literature, it is natural and appropriate that it provides applicable guidance on intense, exclusive and passionate love between a man and a woman, and that it is not exclusively about divine love.

3. List the major themes of Chapter 16 in **Matthews and Benjamin in Social World of Ancient Israel 1250 - 587 BCE**. What are the major points of the chapter? How do these points impact on how you read the Bible? Do you agree or disagree with Matthews' examination of Isaiah 7? Why or why not?

Chapter 16 of Matthews and Benjamin's book explains the role of prophets in the world of the Bible. Prophets work along monarchs, analyzing the short-term consequences of the state's economic, political and diplomatic policies, especially during times of crisis. Their major objective is to ensure that Israel and Judah fulfill their covenant with YHWH. While monarchs have a tendency to build centralized economy (with surplus) and to establish covenants with foreign countries, prophets insist that YHWH is the sole provider and protector of His covenantal people. Prophets also convey messages from the divine assembly to the state through words

and/or pantomimes, and often in ecstasy. These points provide a social and political context for the words and actions of the prophets in the Bible. It enables readers to look at the position of the prophets from a different view point. In addition to working for YHWH, prophets have a position and role within the social and political world of the ANE and there's a power balance between the monarch and the prophet. This chapter is very helpful for Bible readers to understand the power dynamics and social position of the prophets, thus allowing us to gain a deeper understanding of the prophets' words and actions.

With this background, Matthews and Benjamin examines Isaiah 7. The crisis found here is that Judah is torn between her role as Assyria's colony and her covenant with Israel. While Ahaz and his advisors were inclined to remain faithful to Assyria and to face Israel and Syria's invasion with the help of Assyria, Isaiah believed that Judah should remain non-aligned, solely relying on YHWH to defend Jerusalem. Since Ahaz failed to put his trust in YHWH's covenant, Isaiah made use of the child Immanuel's growth as a pantomime to count down the time of Ahaz's execution. I agree with most of Matthews' examination. However, I disagree with his interpretation that Ahaz' refusal to ask for a sign was not out of hypocrisy, but due to the fact that YHWH was a witness to Judah and Assyria's military alliance. According to the Book of Kings, Ahaz was very reliant on Assyria, to the point where he called himself Tiglath-pileser's "servant and son" (2 Kings 16:7). I believe that he was ready to depend on Assyria and that refusing to "tempt the Lord" (Isaiah 7:12) was a fake excuse. If, as suggested by Matthews, Ahaz could not "tempt" the Lord by breaking Judah's military alliance with Assyria, he should be equally tied by Judah's covenant with Israel. I think this explanation is not very convincing.

4. List the major points of Chapter 4 in **Families Ancient Israel**. What are the major points made by Perdue in the chapter? How do these points impact on how you read the Bible?

In Chapter 4 of *Families in Ancient Israel*, Perdue summarizes the major features of early Jewish families. He emphasizes the importance of the patrilineal and patrilocal “household”, which functions as a basic economic unit that produces and consumes food as well as nurtures and educates children. The *בית אב* (*bet ab*, male head of the family) is responsible of arranging marriages and household tasks, as well as settling disputes and maintaining order. Above the household there is the *משפחה* (clan), which is formed by a couple of related households living in proximity. Clans make up tribes, and the tribes form the nation of Israel. Males and Females have different gender roles in the family. While the senior male in the family possessed considerable authority and women are generally legally subordinated to men, females do have certain rights and a significant role in the family. Marriage is a means of maintaining economic stability and protecting the heritage of the households. This is especially obvious in levirate marriages, where a *goel* marries the widow of his kin in order to produce an heir and redeem properties belonging to the household of the deceased person. In the world of the Bible, there are regulations that guarantee the survival and basic rights of the weak in the society, including the fatherless, widows, divorced women, debt servants and slaves, resident aliens, the sick, the aged, the poor and so on. Finally, Perdue points out that in addition to the official Yahwistic religion, household religious traditions and practices also prevailed. At times, there is tension between the two and the state promotes the royal religion as a means of centralization. With the rise of the monarchy, the stability and solidarity of the village household economy is severely affected.

Perdue’s analysis significantly impacts the way I read the Bible. It contextualizes the text by providing a social background. Knowledge on the basic structure and various social roles within a village household is especially helpful in understanding the dynamics among the characters in many of the narratives and explains a lot of their actions. In addition, many of the laws found in the Pentateuch are only comprehensible when we know how the society works. An understanding of the tension between the state and the village also puts things into perspective when reading the historical and prophetic books of the Bible.

Part Three

Directions: Choose or provide the correct answer.

1. One of the roles of the monarch is to ____ raise a standing army_____.

2. A monarch is responsible for raising a stand army to control the local population and to protect and expand borders.

True (X); False ()

3. According to Matthews, the virgin was the most politically significant women in Israel as a state.

True (X); False ()

4. The following are some of the issues dealing with biblical interpretation.

a. () Maximalist approach'

b. () Minimalist approach

c. () Archaeological approach

d. (X) A, B and C

e. () A and B

f. () None of the above

5. Egypt is the most frequently mentioned foreign nation in the Old

Testament. True (X); False ()

6. In the prophetic literature, one notes the use of ___marriage_____ as a metaphor to describe Yahweh and his relationship to Israel.

7. ___Tribe_____, ___clan_____ and the family household were three primary units of social organization in ancient Israel.

8. One of the major functions of the family in ancient Israel was reproduction.

True (X); False ()

9. One of the major functions of the family in ancient Israel was the education of children.

True (X); False ()

10. List 3 major prophets.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel

11. Maintaining social stability was one of the major features of the family. True (X); False ()
12. The economic character of the family was never an important feature in the Ancient Near East.
True (); False (X)
13. Central to family values was the emphasis placed on solidarity grounded in the interdependence of the members that was necessary for survival and continuity.
True (X); False ()
- 14 Familial land ownership was the economic base of Israelite and early Jewish households.
True (X); False ()
15. Most __education__ occurred within the household through the oral transmission of knowledge and skills relating to household tasks, social customs and religious tradition.
16. Prior to state formation, Israelite households within their larger clans established a protective agency of defense against military invaders who threatened them.
True (X); False ()
17. Within the household, _____the father (בית אב)_____ was responsible for maintaining order, adjudicating disputes, arranging marriages, assigning household, maintaining the economic and social support.
18. The three primary units of social organization shaped by kinship structures are the _____tribe_____, _____clan_____, and the family household.
19. Throughout their lives, men were subordinate to women in the clans of the ancient near east.
True (); False (X)
20. In the ancient near east, education is the power to influence the __next generation__.
21. The name provided evidence of the social standing of a person's household.
True (X); False ()
22. In the world of the Bible, _____clothing_____ was not simply an accessory reflecting individual style or personal preference, but could reflect one's status.
23. In the world of the Bible, _____storytelling_____ was used to preserve and pass on traditions.
24. The storyteller, the scribe, and the sage performed stories which served two important functions.

True (X); False ()

25. Storytellers helped monarchs resolve crises which threatened the land and people

True (X); False ()