

Name: Darlene Ingram - NT504

Document Title: Susanna - Apocrypha

Written Assignments #1

Instructions: Use this guide to help you analyze the assigned primary source document. Answer as many of the questions as you can, **using evidence from the document**. Write your answers to as many questions as possible, based on **what you observe** (which may involve reading between the lines).¹

First Impressions

1. What are your first impressions? *Draw from your previous educational and personal knowledge.* Reading the description provided by the Narrator !! of Susanna, immediately Proverbs 31:10 came to mind, “Who can find a virtuous woman?”....She is described as a beautiful woman who feared the Lord and who was raised by righteous parents who trained her right. This introduction reminded me of Job’s entrance in the book of Job, “There was a man”, perfect, upright, God fearing who eschewed evil (1:1). Immediately I thought that the husband would play a more prominent role in the story because they describe his wife, his wealth, his house, and his status as the “most honored of them all” in the community which shows how women were valued during this period. She is who she is because of him. Based on the statements, “according to the Law of Moses”, and Daniel’s outburst on the Judge, “You, offspring of Canaan and not of Judah” we see a Jewish presence in this narrative. We also see a strong Jewish presence based on adherence to the law and Jewish traditions of adultery and death. The story presents a similar motif found in the bible where good triumphs over evil.

Thought very interesting that story was appears in the Greek text rather than the text of the Hebrew Bible of which Daniel is written.

2. What kind of document is it (letter, prayer, historical account, apocalypse, testament, narrative, etc.)? How do you know? *Clues within the text will alert you to the literary genre the writer used to communicate this message.* This document is considered to be a narrative because the narrator is telling the story of Susanna. It has dialogue and characters who interact with one another and gives a connected account of the presented events. It also provides an introduction of setting and characters, a plot(to seduce Susanna), conflict(due to her strong faith), and theme(good triumphs over evil). Yet this narrative precedes the book of Daniel, a prophetic, apocalyptic genre, which is part of a living body of tradition(Helyer, 45) and contributes to Daniel’s rise to prominence(Nickelsburg, 24). “These additions of Daniel and his friends to the book of Daniel illuminates the life of Jews in Diaspora (46).

¹ Adapted and expanded from “Engaging Students with Primary Sources,” Smithsonian *Natural Museum of American History*. <https://historyexplorer.si.edu/sites/default/files/PrimarySources.pdf> Accessed 12/21/2021.

Looking More Closely

1. Read through the document carefully. Make a list of any unusual words, phrases, or concepts. *Does a particular expression or concept strike you as strange? Does it jump out at you? The names, words and phrases denote symbolism on varying levels.*

Susanna's name in Hebrew means "Lily"(Nickelburg, 23), which characterizes her person throughout the narrative.

"So they sent for her. And she came with her parents, her children and all her relatives". Where was her husband and why was he not at trial supporting his wife?

"You, old relic of wicked days" How Daniel identifies one of judges, clearly shows the Babylonian influence.

"You, offspring of Canaan and not of Judah" How Daniel identifies another one of judges, showing the hostility between Canaan and Israel and the treatment of their women.

2. Is there a date on it? If so, what is it? If not, are there any other clues within the document that might indicate when it was written? *Documents may allude to a past well-known event as if it was happening now (a common device used to impact how the hearer-readers understand the message the author wants to convey). 2nd Temple writers tended to look back for precedents that provided analogies for the exhortations or messages they wanted their generation to consider.*

The unknown author sets the story in Babylon but the story reflects the life in exile for Jews(47). According to Nickelsburg(24), "this narrative could have been written at any time in the Hellenistic or late Persian period."

3. Is there a location indicated? What is it? *Explicit locations could be Babylon or Jerusalem, for example. But the location may be veiled. Perhaps the author mentions customs or events that suggest the location is outside of Judea.*

The text clearly denotes that the setting is in Babylon. It reads that, "There was a man living in Babylon whose name was Joakim." The customs and traditions of a wealthy Jew living in Babylon also support this setting.

4. Who wrote or created the document? How can you tell? *If the author is stated, is it the actual person identified or is it an anonymous writer using a famous name to give the message greater authority? 2nd Temple writers often used pseudonyms of well-known biblical characters to draw attention to the seriousness of the issues he is addressing. Is the author familiar with Jewish tradition? Is he familiar with Gentile values? There is much you can learn from the document itself even if you do not know the author's exact identity.*

The identity of the author is unknown but based upon the writings, customs and traditions, the writer appears to have a strong Jewish presence. The writer depicts life in the Jewish community during the time of the diaspora. The gathering together to hold court as a community rather than dealing with the Babylonian court system. Also the introduction of Daniel, the prophet, as the hero to this narrative and Susanna crying out to God and him responding to her with deliverance.

5. For whom was the document written or created? How do you know? *Is the document written to or for a specific group of Jews (or Gentile readers)? Do these Jews seem to live in Palestine or in other parts of the empires in control? Look for clues like the mention of the Torah, Temple, or Jewish customs. Maybe Gentile customs are mentioned (which may clue you into a group of Jews living outside Judea). Do the Gentiles live in parts of the empire—possibly a city—or does the document just have a general audience in mind? The document was written for the Jews living during the Diaspora as an encouragement that God still loved them and would be there for them in troubles. Nickelsburg states that “this narrative could have been written for the purpose of encouraging obedience to God in the midst of the temptations and pressures that arise in the Jewish community”. These people needed hope and to know that they were not forgotten. How can we sing a song of the LORD in a foreign land?(Psalm137:4). How do we maintain our identity in this strange land?*

6. What is the purpose of the document? What made you think this? *Are the documents written to people who are oppressed, need encouragement, need to be warned, etc.? It helps to imagine what life must be like in the era we are studying for a specific lesson. The purpose of the document was to encourage the Jews living during the Diaspora. They needed to know that God still loved them and would be there for them in troubles. Nickelsburg states that “this narrative could have been written for the purpose of encouraging obedience to God in the midst of the temptations and pressures that arise in the Jewish community”. These people needed hope and to know that they were not forgotten.*

Thinking Further

1. What do you think the writer thought was the most important information to convey? Why? *Think theologically and/or practically.*

The author thought it was important to convey that good triumphs over evil. The Jews find themselves in a place where life looks so different for them. They have had to deal with the pains and consequences of their disobedience which has led them to be the captives of their enemies. Two statements in this story capsule what the writer feels is important.

1. “You shall not put an innocent and righteous person to death.”
2. “Then the whole assembly raised a great shout and blessed God, who saves those who hope in him.”

2. Does the document convey a certain tone? *For example, is it entertaining, humorous, encouraging, warning, etc.?*

Inattentiveness(husband), Wickedness, entrapment, seductive, vulnerability, shame, triumphal, hopeful, heroic, suspenseful, and encouraging.

3. Can you tell the point of view of the writer? Is it objective? *No writer is purely objective, but the document may want to portray a sense of being objective (usually historical documents such as the writings of Josephus). Yet even Josephus has a clear bias in how he tells the story of Israel’s history. The point of view could be something*

as simple as favorable to some aspects of a foreign culture or completely disapproving of pagan culture.

Most of the characters appear to be Jewish with the exception of the evil judges who are appointed from the people. Unsure whether they are from Babylon or Jews who have been influenced by the Babylonians. The Lord warns, “Wickedness came forth from Babylon, from Elders who were judges, who were supposed to govern the people” With that being said the author appears to be working from a Jewish point of view, letting the people know that God triumph’s in the end.

4. What is the writer’s attitude about Israel’s God or the nations’ gods? How can you tell?

The writer attitude about Israel God is that he is just and will not allow an innocent person be put to death and He saves those who hope in him.

No mention of the other nation’s god.

5. What is the writer’s attitude toward “Jews”? *Pay particular attention to whether the writer distinguishes between Jews (for example, Jews who are faithful and those who are disobedient to the Torah). Does he disapprove of some Jews?*

The writer displays a positive attitude toward “Jews” based on the fact that the main characters who triumph are all Jewish and serve as heroic figures who have a lesson or statement to convey. Susanna demonstrates her faithfulness to God in so much that she is willing to die instead of sin. Daniel appears and is willing to fight for her virtue.

6. What is the writer’s attitude about “non-Jews” or those ruling over them? How can you tell? *The most pressing issue for Judaism during the 2nd Temple period was the relationship of Jews with Gentiles. Their experiences vary throughout the centuries and with different writers. How is this writer relating or thinking about non-Jews?*

In “Susanna”, this statement expresses how the Jews view the non-Jews of Babylon.. “You offspring of Canaan and not of Judah, Beauty has beguiled you and lust perverted your heart, this is how you have been treating the daughters of Israel and they were intimate with you through fear, but a daughter of Judah would not tolerate your wickedness.” The writer clearly feels that non-Jews are wicked and prey on the women and people of Israel and Judah

7. What does the writer believe about the Torah (the Law)? *2nd Temple Judaism was unified in their common interest in the Mosaic Law and the idea that all forms of Judaism related to it in one way or another. The law is discussed to some degree or another throughout the Jewish corpus of 2nd Temple literature. Think about such issues as whether the author thinks the Mosaic covenant is eternal. Does he see a connection between the law and wisdom or perhaps between the Mosaic Law and the unwritten law of nature? To what extent is the Law applicable to the nations?*

The Author thinks that the Law or Torah is what makes a person righteous and provides a measuring rod for righteousness. This is seen in the description of Susanna, she was raised by righteous parents who trained her according to the “Law of Moses”. Punishment for the 2 Elders was also give in accordance with the law of Moses. So the Law of Moses was held in high standards for righteousness and punishment.

8. What other customs or institutions of Judaism do the writers mention? What is his attitude toward these customs or institutions? *These can include such things as dietary laws, marriage, the Temple, the priesthood, etc.*

The institution of marriage was very sacred because they're willing to kill Susanna for adultery as per the laws of the people, until Daniel proved her innocence. She calls out to God and God replies to her plea by sending Daniel to save her from her fate.

9. What is the attitude of the writer toward morality or natural law? How can you tell? *The writer may have a general audience in mind, or he may have a specific group he is addressing. Does he expect these groups to demonstrate morality?*

The Writer is addressing the Jews of the Diaspora and he hopes and purposes that by telling this story morality is maintained among the people while they are in exile. Nickelsburg states that "this narrative could have been written for the purpose of encouraging obedience to God in the midst of the temptations and pressures that arise in the Jewish community".

10. Does the document remind you of any biblical event, character, or book of the Bible? What made you think of those events, characters, or biblical books?

The introduction reminded me of Job's entrance in the book of Job, "There was a man", perfect, upright, God fearing who eschewed evil (1:1). Description of Joakim is similar

Esther when she stated that she was going before the King and if she perished, she would just perish. Susanna's speech was similar when she stated that due to her strong faith, "I can not do it, I will fall into your hands, rather than sin in the sight of the Lord".

The fate of Haman, whose plan to destroy the Jews led to his own destruction, just like the elders.

The story of Joseph as he fled from Potiphar's wife rather than do evil in the sight of His God".

Summary Statement: How does this document give insight into the beliefs and concerns of Jews for the historical period being investigated? How does it add to what the textbooks say about the period?

The author of our text, Larry R. Helyer sees the story of Susanna as a story of morality built on the foundations of Jewish laws of piety to keep the Jewish remnant obedient to the Law. While Nickelsburg summarizes the story as a story about life in a Jewish community that encourages faithfulness in the midst of temptations and struggles in a strange land. This story is encouraging and hopeful to a people who must survive in a land that is not their own and is not their home. Susanna is seen as an innocent flower (Lily) who is preyed upon by two strong and devious forces who are desiring to destroy her. She demonstrates strength by standing up to her accusers and seeking God or help. She calls upon God and he hears her cry and sends help in the form of Daniel who will fight for her victory. Is this not similar to what the Jews in the diaspora were going through. They were in the enemies camp and needed help, so they are calling on God to answer and bring them deliverance and victory from their circumstances.