



Women and the Kingdom of Israel

Women in Antiquity | Meeting #10

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Upcoming Dates

- Monday, May 18
Position Paper Due
- Tuesday, May 26
Images Essay Due
- Sunday, May 3
Responses for Week 10 Due

2

Fall 2026 courses in Ancient History

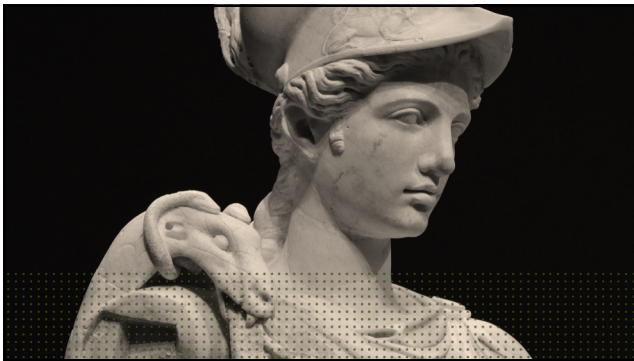
 <p>HIA 320 / 720</p>	<p>History of Ancient Greece</p> <p>The unfolding and culmination of civilization in Greece, through key transformations of Greek culture and city-states from the Bronze Age up through the Hellenistic period of the east.</p> <p>Thurs 9:00-9:45 p.m.</p> <p>Prof. Wilson 3 credits W/Res Intensive</p>	 <p>HIA 314 / 714</p>	<p>Classical Myth and Society</p> <p>A comparison of the origins and development of classical mythology and heroic legend as religious beliefs, their relation to other mythologies, and their adaptation in literature and art from Mesopotamian and Homer through the present.</p> <p>Fri 12-11:55 p.m. (DYN010)</p> <p>Prof. Marinelli 3 credits W/ Intensive</p>
 <p>HIA 311 / 750</p>	<p>Women in Antiquity</p> <p>Examination of the image, role, and status of women in Ancient Greek, Ancient Roman, and other societies as seen through the important literary works of antiquity.</p> <p>Tues 6:00-6:45 p.m.</p> <p>Prof. Wilson 3 credits W/Res Intensive</p>	 <p>HIS 246</p>	<p>Civilizations of the Ancient World</p> <p>A survey of the Mediterranean world, tracing the development of civilization from Mesopotamia and Egypt to ancient Greek, City-States and the dominion of Rome.</p> <p>Tues 9:00-9:45 p.m.</p> <p>Prof. Wilson 3 credits</p>

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Five things today

- The Kingdom of Israel
- Abraham and Isaac
- The Babylonian Captivity
- Ruth and Esther
- Monotheism and Gender

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Quiz #8 | Women and the Kingdom of Israel

- According to the Book of Esther, Esther saves her people by
 - defying the law that she cannot present herself to the king and demanding that he do as she bids
 - hosting a wine banquet for the king and Haman, at which the besotted king offers her anything
 - using her authority as the queen to command the guards to prevent the massacre
 - pleading to God for a miracle
- In the story of Ruth, after her husband, her brother-in-law, and her father-in-law all die, the Moabite woman Ruth decides to do
 - wander the Earth as a holy woman
 - journey to Babylon to become a priestess
 - stay in Moab alone
 - remain loyal to her husband's family and return to his homeland, Judah
- The Judean landholder whom Ruth meets at the threshing of the grain and who later marries her is
 - Boaz
 - Elimelech
 - Eliphaz
 - Jeif
- In the Book of Esther, the threat to the local Persian Jewish community is sparked by
 - Mordecai's refusal to bow to the king's vizier, Haman
 - the Jewish God's wrath at his people's infidelity
 - the raging, bloodthirsty personality of the king
 - a rampage of gazelles
- Abasenus is the name of Esther's
 - king
 - cousin
 - compact with God
 - cat

Extra Credit

EC. In the Book of Esther, how is the behavior of Vashti, the previous queen, contrasted with Esther's?

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Questions from the Responses

- More about funeral rituals that Ancient Egyptians have practiced, particularly mummification and other important rites associated with death
- How often did a fight for the throne within or between families happen?
- How common was it for women to hold power in ancient Egypt and whether other women were represented in similar ways?
- Did these images represent actual social power for women, or were they merely symbolic and confined to elite or royal figures?
- Did a female pharaoh's husband acknowledge their leadership in public or more in private, or maybe both?
- I would want to know more about how people at the time actually viewed Hatshepsut. Did they accept her as pharaoh easily, or was this kind of image also meant to persuade people to accept her rule?
- I wonder if the view of women were also more flexible in other ancient civilizations besides Egypt?

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Questions about whatever



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The Kingdom of Israel



9

The Fertile Crescent



10



Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar

- Abraham traveled into Canaan with his clan
- Wife was infertile, so she gave him a concubine
 - Result: a son, Ishmael
- Sarah had a miracle baby, Isaac
- Hagar and Ishmael cast out

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Secondary Source Reading

Sebastian Brock Reading Between the Lines: Sarah and the Sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis, Chapter 22)

- Viewpoint of Sarah is missing from the story of the sacrifice
 - Left to speculation of later writers trying to plumb the deepest meaning of the sacrifice
 - Depends on age assumed for Isaac
- Multiple paths
 - Sarah was deliberately excluded by god or Abraham
 - Sarah's faith is tested as much as Abraham's, or more
 - Both tested with respect to their roles as father and mother, husband and wife



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The Exodus

- Semitic labor force in Bronze Age Egypt includes many Hebrew tribes
- New Kingdom disrupted at the end of the Bronze Age
- Evidence of Hebrew departure from Egypt comes only from Hebrew legends

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Hebrew tribes in Canaan

- Fertile and strategic areas already occupied
- Risk of attrition as young drawn to Canaanite cities
- Hebrews divided into mutually hostile tribes
 - Each tribe trying to take its own lands
 - Tribal leaders called "Judges"

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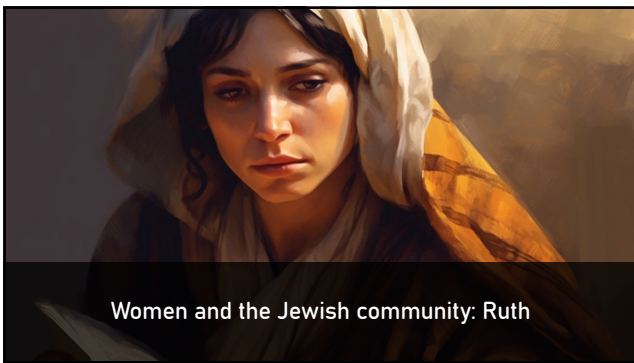


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Why is this a story about a Moabite woman?

16



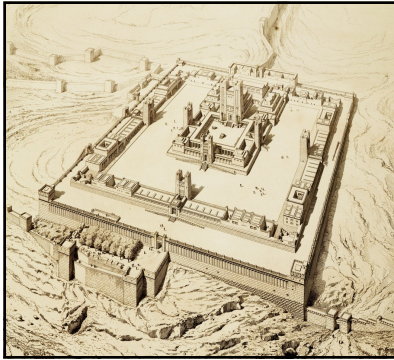
Women and the Jewish community: Ruth

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Expansion of the Kingdom of Israel

- Flourishes under kings Saul, David, and Solomon
- Israel aggressively expands in territory and influence
- Phoenicians retain coastal cities and trade network
 - Extensive trade with Israel
 - Material and expertise made Great Temple possible

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Great Temple

- Built under David and Solomon
- Challenge to other great cities (e.g., Babylon)
 - Economic and political power of Israel
 - Unmatched power of the one true God Yahweh

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Divided Kingdom

- After Solomon, cohesion ends
- Two hostile kingdoms result
 - Kingdom of Israel (Northern)
 - Kingdom of Judah (Southern)
- Northern kingdom has more cities and resources

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Neo-Assyrian Empire

- Called "Neo-Assyrian" because it's the "new" one
 - "Old" Assyrian empire fell with the collapse of the Bronze Age
- Rapid expansion to dominate Mesopotamia, then beyond

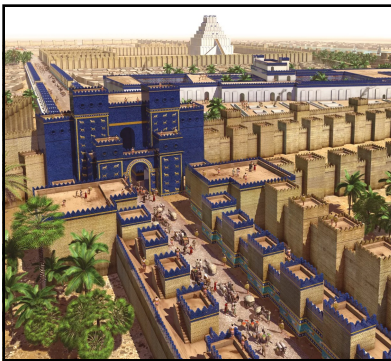
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Deportation of Northern Kingdom (722 BCE)

- Monotheism gives the Hebrews a stronger identity
- Assyrians try to crush Northern Kingdom (Israel) with tributes and oppression
- Finally deport landholders to Assyria
- Northern Kingdom resettled with foreign colonists

22



Babylon

- Exerts authority through cultural and technological dominance
- Babylon draws the skilled and wealthy

23



"Tower of Babel"

- Hebrew metaphor for Babylonian arrogance

24



Etemenanki Ziggurat

- Largest ziggurat in the world
- Home of Babylon's patron god, Marduk

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The Babylonian Captivity (587-538 BCE)

- Southern Kingdom (Judah) resistant to Babylon
- Babylon deports landholders
- In Babylon, Judeans (Jews) fight assimilation
 - Preservation of history and language
 - Food and clothing taboos
 - Circumcision
 - Sabbath
- Jewish identity preserved

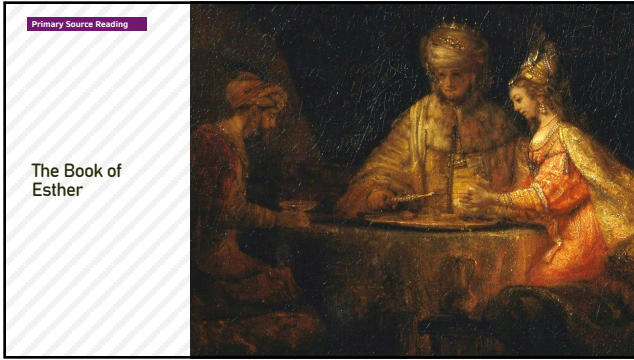
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Eve

- Serpent tempts Eve
 - Eat from forbidden tree
 - Get Adam to do it
- Judgments of Yahweh
 - Serpent cursed to crawl on its belly
 - Eve cursed with painful childbearing
 - Adam has to toil and till

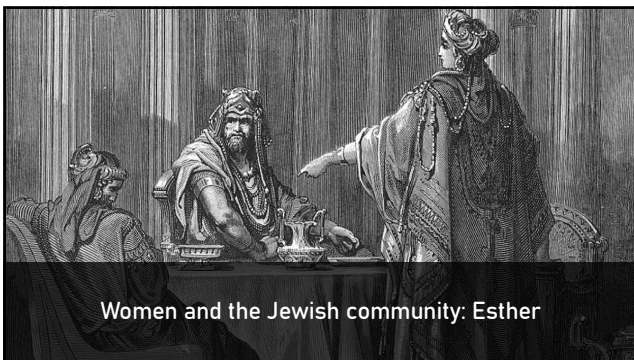
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Monotheism

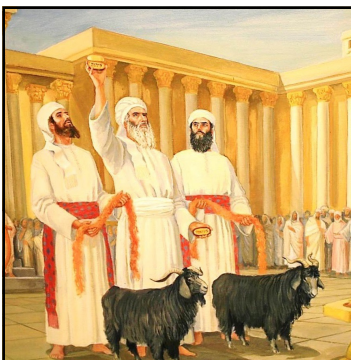
- Pagan gods represent natural forces
 - Bound to the land
 - Local
- Yahweh creates a covenant of mutual benefit
 - Protection in exchange for faith and rejection of other gods
 - Covenant is personal, not group
 - Relationship exists regardless of location
- No other gods
 - Pagan peoples are sinners/barbarians
 - Yahweh will protect

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Why does monotheism lead to female exclusion?

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Female exclusion in Jewish religious practice


- The covenant creates a mutually conditional relationship
- Need to be worthy creates a focus on purity and education
- Purity is affected by menstruation
 - Jews have a longstanding tradition of taboo regarding blood
 - Menstruation = ritually unpure
- Education requires constant presence for all training, holy days, and rituals

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Secondary Source Reading

Léonie Archer
Notions of Community and the Exclusion of the Female in Jewish History and Historiography

- Sense of exclusion varies
 - Across time
 - Across class—what we know most about is toward upper end of society
- Tend to find ways to assert gender identity through their own communities
- Collective expression in public or in an insular way



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Hellenistic Canaan

- Mix of traditional Jewish and Hellenistic influence
- Conflicts between Pharisees and Sadducees

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Secondary Source Reading

Léonie Archer
The Role of Jewish Women in the Religion, Ritual, and Cult of Graeco-Roman Palestine

- Later period when separation reaches the logical extreme
- Only participation publicly is through weeping
- Within the family is profoundly different



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