

Humanities 1
Professor Stanley Chodorow
Winter 2014

Writing Assignment #1: Hebrew Bible

Choose one of the two following essay topics:

1. We describe the social system of the Hebrew Bible as patriarchal. The father rules the family; the son, presumably the eldest son, succeeds him. All other members of the family are subordinate to the patriarch. Considering the depictions of father-son relationships in Genesis, is this simple description of the family structure and dynamics accurate? Is the fate of every son of the patriarch determined by the family structure? Look at the examples of Abraham and his sons, Isaac and his sons, and Jacob and his sons, and using two of these examples of the patriarchal family, write a thesis-based essay in which you compare or contrast your two sets of father-sons relationships in Genesis.

2. God chose Abraham to be "the father of many nations" because of his obedience to divine commands. Abraham was even willing to sacrifice his son because God commanded him to do so. Moses undertook a difficult and dangerous mission in obedience to God's command. How did each of these leaders of the people relate to God? Was the relationship between God and his people, through Abraham and Moses, consistent and unchanging or did it change from one to the other leader? Write a thesis-based essay in which you compare or contrast Abraham's relationship with God to Moses'.

Thesis: Make sure that your claim meets the standards outlined in the "Thesis" handout.

4 tests for a good thesis:

1. Is it an explanation, not a fact?
2. Can someone argue against it?
3. Is it too obvious to be worth defending?
4. Is it precise?

Evidence: Make sure your argument shows just how the textual evidence supports the thesis.

Length: 4-5 pages.

Due: After lecture, Tuesday 28 January. Late papers will be penalized by the subtraction of one-third letter grade per day. Finally, don't forget turnitin.com!