The Garden of Eatin':
How Eating and Drinking Motifs Affect Biblical Narrative

Elle Alexzandra Muhlbaum

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Graduate Rabbinical Program
New York, New York
2016

Advised by Dr. David Sperling

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Ordination

Elle Muhlbaum
Rabbinic Thesis 2016

The Garden of Eatin': How Eating and Drinking Motifs Affect Biblical Narrative

Summary

This thesis seeks to explore the ways in which eating and drinking motifs affect biblical narrative. It consists of four chapters and five excurses, in addition to an introduction, conclusion, and two appendices.

The goal of this thesis is to examine how eating and drinking motifs function in biblical narrative. It analyzes scenes involving hospitality, covenant, miracles, perfidy, vegetarianism, sex, dreams, etiologies, and military leadership, and how eating and drinking play roles within. While many biblical scholars have written on special topics relating to food in the Hebrew Bible, this thesis serves as a broad analysis made up of close readings of particular biblical narrative passages.

The basis of this thesis is narrative biblical passages. The other materials used ranged from classical biblical commentary and modern analyses of the biblical text itself.

But knowledge is as food, and needs no less
Her temp’rance over appetite, to know
In measure what the mind may well contain;
Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind.

John Milton, Paradise Lost 7:126-130

In Gratitude

As a foodie rabbinical student, my life revolves around food and Torah. I don't like to eat alone, and I don't like to study alone. Thank God I have so many people in my life who support me, nourishing my body and soul with tasty treats and stimulating study.

To my advisor, Dr. David Sperling: thank you for teaching me to always ask questions, that Calebites are hound dogs, and that there is always something to be found in the sacred stories of our people. I am so grateful for your patience and guidance throughout this process. Thank you for working with me!

To Dr. Yossi Leshem, Dr. David Aaron, Dr. David Sperling, and Dr. Sharon Koren: studying Bible with each of you has been an engaging, compelling, and life-changing experience. Each of you has opened my eyes to new ways of understanding our sacred texts and their formation. Thank you for dedicating so much energy and passion to learning and teaching, so that I may do the same. I carry your Torah with me, and I am so grateful to each one of you.

To the entire HUC-JIR faculty, in New York, Cincinnati, and Jerusalem: it has been a great blessing in my life to study with all of you over the past five years. Your lessons have inspired me, and I feel grateful to carry on your teachings into the future. You have helped me become a rabbi over these last five years, and I have loved learning with you all.

To my husband, Vladimir Lapin, whose love sustains my spirit, and whose passion for delicious food makes certain that no two meals are exactly the same. Thanks, Champagne.

To my parents, Jan and Steve, who raised us in the warmest kitchen and helped us find a simultaneous love of Torah and of shellfish. I may not be a typical rabbi, since I sure can crack a crab leg. The two of you are amazing, and continue to nourish my soul and body with all that you teach and cook. Thank you for everything, especially for making my heart and belly so full.

To my brother and sister, Abraham and Yaffa, for being my favorite recipe taste-testers, and standing next to me through countless batches of chocolate chip cookies. I love rolling matza balls with you guys. Really, I do.

To my dear friends and family members, who know that the best stories are told over food and drink. With you, I grow wiser and more…well-rounded.

Menu

Introduction[1]

The summer of 2011, I began rabbinical school at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem. There, I studied with a brilliant Bible scholar, Yossi Leshem. Yossi guided us through the tales of our people, introducing us to new ways of thinking about the Hebrew Bible and all that it symbolized. One day, we were studying the concept of *prat tei'uri*, an additional descriptive detail provided by the biblical narrator that offers readers an extra glimpse into the narrative. We opened our copies of the Tanakh to the story of Joseph in Genesis 37. Yossi explained that verse 24 provided an excellent example of a *prat tei'uri*. There, it is written, "*vayyiqachuhu vayyashlichu 'oto haborah, v'habor reiq, 'ain bo mayim*—[Joseph's brothers] took him and cast him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it." The reason this is a *prat tei'uri*, teaches Yossi Leshem, is because of course the pit is empty: why, then, does the biblical narrator tell us that there is no water in the pit? Was it a plastered cistern dug to hold water during the rainy season, with the narrator including this detail so readers would understand why Joseph did not drown[2]? Was it to indicate that, in lieu of water, there were snakes and scorpions in the pit[3]? This issue has intrigued commentators for generations.

Genesis 37:24 sparked something for me.

Genesis 37:24 is critical to this thesis for one reason: it comes immediately before Genesis 37:25. There, it is written, "*vayyeishvu le'echol-lechem*—they sat down to eat bread…"

---

[1] N.B. This work contains references to many biblical texts, and is intended to be read alongside a Hebrew Tanakh.
[2] Sarna, *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*, 259.
[3] Rashi on Genesis 37:24

As a first year rabbinical student, I found this verse terribly troubling. I understood the syntax, I knew the words that made up the phrase…but what could it possibly mean that Joseph's brothers would sit down for a nosh immediately after tossing their brother into a pit which, we know for certain, *had no water*?! They left their brother for dead, and decided to break bread. I pictured them dangling their treacherous toes into the pit, sitting proudly perched around the opening of the pit. I could imagine their smug laughter, their gloating. I could almost see Joseph peeking up at them, hoping that they might drop a morsel or two for him. In my mind's eye, Joseph's brothers breaking bread around this desolate pit was crueler than anything Pharaoh had done. I decided that Joseph's brothers must be among the most evil of people, if they would have an appetite after such a vicious act.

That lesson on the biblical usage of the *prat tei'uri* stuck with me throughout rabbinical school. Any time I encountered a biblical passage that featured characters eating, I tried to figure out whether their eating was similar to or different from that of Joseph's brothers. Did *le'echol-lechem* always mean eating bread after doing something terrible? Was a *prat tei'uri* somehow involved?

And so, when it came time to decide a topic to pursue in the form of a rabbinic thesis, I knew I would want to engage in the mystery of eating and drinking in the Hebrew Bible.

This thesis is, to be sure, not an anthropological study of biblical eating. What the actual foodstuffs were, whether they were indigenous to the land of Canaan, and how the foods would have been prepared are each topics better left to anthropologists and archaeologists. This thesis is also not focused on *kashrut*, ritual eating, the cult of sacrifice, priestly consumption of offerings, or feasts.

This thesis is, at its core, an examination of how eating and drinking motifs are used in biblical narrative. It is an exploration of the different ways in which eating and drinking are used throughout the corpus of biblical literature. Its analysis is on a selection of biblical passages, not on the entirety of the Hebrew Bible. It explores a variety of themes, and surveys how food-related imagery or idioms affect the narrative.

Mentions of food or eating occur in many biblical narratives, in a wide array of contexts. According to my reading, however, there is never a story wherein the biblical writer includes the eating of food in a narrative passage because food is required for normal, quotidian life. When food or eating appear in a passage, it is significant. As Robert P. Carroll teaches, "The ordinary is so extraordinary that it fills column after column in a most complex and convoluted set of figures and images, metaphors and metonyms—amounting to a virtual metaphysics of food and drink."[4] Food is significant not just because it leads to human and animal survival. It is used time and again as a literary device. From famine to bounty, vegetarianism to animal sacrifice, from trees of knowledge to stews of deception, the Hebrew Bible is replete with enough food references to satiate even the most ravenous of appetites.

This thesis will seek to digest the various usages of food and drink references throughout the Hebrew Bible. To do so, narrative passages are analyzed based on theme: Hospitality, Covenant, Miracles, and Perfidy constitute the major passages of the analysis. Following those chapters will be a section of excurses analyzing special themes, including the question of Vegetarianism as a Biblical Ideal. Food and Sex, Dreams, Etiologies, and Military Leadership will be included as excurses as well.

[4] Robert P. Carroll, "YHWH's Sour Grapes: Images of Food and Drink in the Prophetic Discourses of the Hebrew Bible," *Semeia* no.86 (1999): 115.

In Pirkei Avot 3:21, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah teaches "*'im 'ain kemach, 'ain Torah, v'im 'ain Torah, 'ain kemach*—if there is no flour, there is no Torah, and if there is no Torah, there is no flour." The flour of Rabbi Elazar's teaching is baked into the nourishing bread of Torah both within the Torah itself and in the study of Torah. May this thesis be as nourishing for you as it has been for me. Table fellowship symbolizes fellowship in all aspects of life; together, let us dive in to the tasty meal set before us.

Before we tuck into the main courses, I offer the following analysis as an amuse-bouche.

The Garden of Eatin': Genesis 2-3[5]

When studying eating in biblical narratives, one would be utterly remiss to skip over the very first story that involves humans eating: the Garden of Eden. In Genesis 2:8, God plants a garden in Eden, and places Adam within the garden. Among the plants provided there were trees that were pleasing to the sight *v'tov l'ma'achal*, and good to eat. God puts Adam in the garden, to till it and to tend it (2:15). God then gives Adam instructions: "*mikol 'eitz-hagan 'achol to'cheil, umei'eitz hada'et tov vara' lo' to'chal mimenu, ki b'yom 'acholcha mimenu mot tamut*—of every tree of the garden you are free to eat, but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die" (2:16-17). Even before Eve is created, Adam is prohibited from eating from this one particular tree, for fear of death. Furthermore, God as gardener has provided all the necessary foodstuffs for Adam's survival; once Adam is told to till and tend the earth, God ceases from the work of providing man with food.

[5] For a recipe, see Appendix C

God decides it is not good for Adam to be alone, so God brings Adam all of the other creatures of the world to give them proper names. When no fitting partner is found for Adam, God casts a deep sleep over him, takes one of his ribs, and fashions it into a woman. The biblical narrator informs readers that the man and the woman were both naked, but felt no shame. A very shrewd serpent comes to the woman and asks her, "Did God really tell you '*lo to'chlu mikol 'eitz hagan*—you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1). The woman answers the serpent, though her knowledge must be second-hand; she had not yet been created when God prohibited Adam from eating of the particular tree. Eve indicates to the serpent that the prohibition is only against eating of the tree in the middle of the Garden. The serpent tells the woman that the consequence for eating of the tree is not death. Instead, the serpent informs her, God knows that as soon as she and Adam eat from the tree their eyes will be opened and they will be like divine beings who know good and bad. *Vatteire' ha'ishah ki tov ha'eitz l'ma'achal,* When the woman saw[6] that the tree was good for eating, *v'chi ta'avah-hu' la'einayim,* and a delight to the eyes, *v'nechmad ha'eitz l'hashkil,*[7] and that the tree was desirable to look at, *vatiqach mipiryo vatto'chal,* she took of its fruit and she ate, *vattitein gam-l'ishah 'immah vayyo'chal,* and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate (3:6). This act of sharing fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and bad is one of the best-known circumstances of biblical characters eating, and it comes with consequences.

Adam and Eve sew garments for themselves from the foliage of the Garden. God calls out to Adam, like a parent looking for a toddler whose location he already knows,

---

[6] There's a pun here. The basic sense √r'h is "look at," It comes to mean "understanding" in the same way that we say "I see" when we mean "I understand." Another word for understanding is insight!

[7] There's another pun here. The basic sense of √§kl is "see," "look at." It's later spelled with samek and survives in Ivrit *mistakkel*.

"*Ayekah*—where are you?" And, as a child might do, Adam immediately shirks the blame. When God asks if Adam has eaten from the tree from which God had forbidden him to eat, Adam blames the woman whom God had provided as a partner, and replies, "*ha'ishah 'asher natatah 'imadi hi' natnah-li min-ha'eitz va'ocheil*—the woman You put at my side gave me of the tree, and I ate" (3:12). The woman deflects as well, telling God "*hanachash hishi'ani va'ocheil*—the serpent duped me, and I ate" (3:13). The serpent, the woman, and the man all receive punishments for their actions. The serpent is cursed beyond any other animal, and will be sentenced to a life of belly-crawling *v'afar to'chal kol-y'mei chayyecha*—and dirt shall he eat all the days of his life. The woman, though not cursed, is punished with pains in childbearing, and submission to her husband. Adam is punished for listening to Eve instead of to God, *b'itzabon to'chalenah kol y'meiy chayecha*, so by toil Adam will eat of the earth's produce. Though the ground will sprout thorns and thistles, Adam is to make his food from the grasses of the field. *B'zei'at 'apecha to'chal lechem*, by the sweat of his brow will Adam make bread to eat (3:19). God remarks, "Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and bad, what if he should stretch out his hand and take also from *'eitz hachayim v'achal vachay l'olam* the tree of life, and eat from it, and live forever?" (3:22). God banishes Adam from the Garden, to till the dust from which he himself was taken.

In this narrative, it is food that separates humankind from the divine. In her article, "To Eat or Not To Eat: Where is Wisdom in This Choice?" Judith E. McKinlay studies three narrative passages that involve eating (Genesis 2-3, Proverbs 9, and 1 Samuel 25). McKinlay understands the food in the Garden of Eden to be the boundary line between God and Man. She writes,

> But this food which separates the Us, the gods/God, from the You, humankind, not only sets a boundary but has within it the power to kill the very life force which distinguishes the human from the lifeless dust-shaped form. By God's decree this is food for Others, divine beings only. But, and this is the interest of the plot, as the story evolves the food loses its deathly power and becomes also food for Us, humankind…the boundary then no longer holds securely.[8]

When Adam and Eve eat from the forbidden tree, they begin to degrade a critical boundary between themselves and their Creator. By the end of the story, they have become like divine beings because they know good and evil. Unlike divine beings, Adam and Eve remain mortal.

McKinlay draws an important parallel between the Garden of Eden narrative and the scene described in Proverbs 9. There, *Chochmot,* Wisdom, the hostess, sets a feast for the simple, that they should come and eat the food and drink the wine that she has prepared, giving up simpleness and walking instead in the way of understanding. Though in Psalm 23:5 and Isaiah 25:6 it is God who offers a table to Israel, here it is Lady Wisdom who prepares a banquet of life; "but once again, this is not simply food for hunger and wine for thirst, the call of the invitation to this lavish feast is to lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of discerning understanding."[9] A parallel poem (Prov. 9:13-18) continues with a tale of another hostess, *'eshet k'silut*, the Woman of Stupidity. This hostess sits in her doorway, calling to wayfarers who are simple to enter into her home. She tells them, *"mayim-gnovim yimtaqu, v'lechem starim yin'am*—stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten furtively is tasty" (9:17). Her guests, however, end up in the depths of Sheol (9:18).

Though Genesis 2-3 presents a category of approved food (good for humans to eat) and a category of prohibited food (bad for God for humans to eat), in Proverbs 9 there are two feasts, one for life and one for death. While in Genesis 2-3, the prohibition against the

[8] McKinlay, "To Eat or Not To Eat: Where Is Wisdom in This Choice?" 75.
[9] Ibid. 78

forbidden food is made clear, in Proverbs 9 both the banquet of life and the fool's table are available to the passerby, who must choose for himself where he cares to dine. While the forbidden fruit of the Garden leads to immortality, in Proverbs the diner must choose between life and death.

The Garden of Eden is a fascinating starting point for a study of how eating and drinking can affect biblical narratives. Eating has consequences; it can get a person banished from paradise. But eating can also be illuminating, allowing a person to see good and bad in the world. Food carries much more than nutrients in the Hebrew Bible.

Hospitality

Introduction:

Throughout the corpus of biblical literature, hospitality serves an important role. Some characters, like Abraham, become exemplars of welcoming the divine presence into their homes. Others, like Yael, utilize their role as host for ulterior motives. Still others, like Rebekah, prove their worth by being exceptionally hospitable. Others, like Daniel, significantly refuse the hospitality offered to them.

In his study of biblical type-scenes, Robert Alter uses the Homerian type-scene of hospitality as a paradigm by which to study biblical counterparts. Of Homerian hospitality type-scenes, he writes, "The type-scene of the visit, for example, should unfold according to the following fixed pattern: a guest approaches; someone spots him, gets up, hurries to greet him; the guest is taken by the hand, led into the room, invited to take the seat of honor; the guest is enjoined to feast; the ensuing meal is described. Almost any description of a visit in Homer will reproduce more or less this sequence not because of an overlap of sources but because that is how the convention requires such a scene to be rendered."[10] Using Alter's description of a Homerian hospitality type-scene as a basis, it is possible to overlay similar conventions onto biblical literature. Biblical hospitality type-scenes will include a guest, a host greeting the guest (sometimes eagerly, sometimes not), and the offer of food or drink (or an acknowledgement of the inability to do so). Since "the Bible touches on the quotidian only as a sphere for the realization of portentous actions,"[11] these biblical hospitality scenes are meaningful; they are opportunities for something portentous to be revealed or fulfilled.

[10] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 59-60.
[11] Ibid. 60

This chapter will serve to present and analyze different types of hospitality scenes in biblical literature. First, there are scenes that describe straightforward hospitality (Genesis 18, Genesis 14, Genesis 24, and 2 Samuel 17). Second, there are scenes that feature water-drawing for people and/or animals as hospitality (Genesis 24, 28-29, Exodus 2). Third, there are scenes wherein there is perfidy within the hospitality being offered (Genesis 18, Judges 4, Judges 19, 2 Samuel 11, 1 Kings 13, Job 1). Fourth, there are scenes where hospitality and divine will are linked (1 Kings 17, 1 Kings 19, 2 Kings 4, 2 Kings 6, Job 42, Ruth 2). Fifth and finally, there are scenes wherein the offer of hospitality is rejected or manipulated by the guest/recipient of the hospitality (1 Samuel 25, 1 Kings 13, Daniel 1, Leviticus 10, 2 Samuel 12).

A. Straightforward Hospitality

In this section, passages featuring straightforward presentations of hospitality will be analyzed. Whether guests are royal or divine, named or anonymous, known or unknown, hospitality serves to connect guest and host.

A1. Gen 18:1-16 (Abraham and the Three Men) and Gen 14 (Melchizedek and Abram)

In this passage, Abraham establishes himself as the embodiment of the biblical paradigm of hospitality. When God appears to Abraham in the form of three men, Abraham is sitting at the entrance of his tent. It is the hottest part of the day, and rather than rest, Abraham springs to his feet, offering a humble *pat lechem* (morsel of bread) to satisfy his wayfaring visitors. Once in the tent, Abraham calls to his wife, Sarah, and demands she hasten to make cakes of choice flour. Meanwhile, Abraham runs to take a choice calf, has his servant prepare it, and offers it alongside curds and milk to set a veritable feast before his visitors.

In his article, "Abraham's Hospitality among Jewish and Early Christian Writers: A Tradition of Gen 18:1-16 and Its Relevance for the Study of the New Testament," Andrew E. Arterbury chronologically examines the textual tradition surrounding this passage of Genesis 18. There, he cites biblical scholar Claus Westermann, who, with regard to the disparity between Abraham's offer and the meal he actually provides, "contends that Abraham's understatement about the provisions he will provide for his guests is best described as 'the language of politeness; it is meant to minimize the exhausting work of entertainment.'"[12] There is something gracious about how Abraham offers a meager piece of bread but throws together something outrageous, with his choicest calf and finest cakes. Abraham sets his example for modern Jewish mothers, who, when they say they will "throw something together," end up putting out an elaborate spread.

Arterbury's analysis includes an excursus on how Philo, Josephus, and, later, the Avot D'Rabbi Natan use Genesis 18 as a touchstone text about hospitality. Though some scholars read Genesis 18 as an annunciation type scene wherein Abraham's hospitality functions as a neutral plot context for God's announcement of Isaac's future birth, "Philo places less stress on the use of this story as the context for the announcement of Isaac's birth and more stress on the way in which Abraham's hospitality demonstrates Abraham's virtues; Philo's stated goal for this entire treatise (48-55)."[13] For Philo, it is Abraham's virtue of piety, not his exemplary hospitality, that is the key focus of the passage. Philo looks directly at the relationship between Abraham and God, instead of the presence of the three men, and he

[12] A. Arterbury, "Abraham's Hospitality among Jewish and Early Christian Writers: A Tradition History of Gen 18:1-16 and Its Relevance for the Study of the New Testament," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no.3 (2003): 360.
[13] Ibid. 362

understands this narrative as a story about how humans can and should welcome the presence of God. Furthermore, in Philo's retelling of this passage, he shows that "Abraham enjoyed extending hospitality to strangers; he did not perceive hospitality to be a burden, but a blessing…Philo characterizes the pronouncement of Isaac's birth as a reward to Abraham for his hospitality."[14] Arterbury adds that "Josephus enhances Abraham's hospitality by having Abraham himself sacrifice and cook the calf, whereas in Gen. 18:7 he gives it to his servant to prepare it…Josephus, like Philo, is careful to explain that the angels did not actually eat the food they were given even though Abraham thought they did."[15]

In his analysis of Avot D'Rabbi Natan, Arterbury examines Rabbi Nathan's contrast between Abraham and Job. Whereas

> Job sat and wasted time by allowing wayfarers to come to him…[and] Job fed people what they were used to eating…Abraham 'would go forth and make the rounds everywhere' in order to find his guests. In addition, Abraham would provide his poor guests with extravagant and expensive foods and drinks to which they were not accustomed as opposed to the foods and drinks that were commonplace for them…For Rabbi Nathan, however, Abraham's motive behind his hospitality was the conversion of his guests.[16]

This depiction of Abraham-as-proselytizer is continued in Genesis Rabbah and the Babylonian Talmud Tractate *Sotah*[17], and continues the theme of Abraham's piety.

Arterbury's analysis of the various textual traditions surrounding Genesis 18:1-16 calls attention to interesting examples of post-biblical interpretations of the hospitality scene depicted therein. However, viewing Abraham's hospitality in isolation is insufficient. There are many examples of biblical hospitality that depict eating and drinking for various reasons. In his article, "Abraham's Hospitality," Jeffery M. Cohen compares and contrasts Abraham's

[14] Ibid. 364
[15] Ibid. 366
[16] Ibid. 371
[17] Ibid. 372

hospitality in Genesis 18 with that of King Melchizedek of Salem in Genesis 14. There, Abram goes to Dan to take back his kinsman. He returns from defeating Chedorlaomer, and the king of Sodom comes to meet him. King Melchizedek of Salem *hotzi' lechem va'yayin,* brings forth bread and wine as *kohein l'eil 'elyon,* a priest of God Most High, and Melchizedek offers a blessing to Abram.

Cohen analyzes Genesis 14 against Genesis 18 not to evaluate how these two passages relate to hospitality, but instead to examine the symbolism of bread and wine in both meals proffered. Melchizedek brings the food and drink out of his home to Abram, while Abraham runs out to meet his guests and welcomes them into his home. For Abraham, the act of hospitality comes with a "sense of excitement, privilege, and personal involvement…one can sense an atmosphere of excitement and activity building up…[as] he himself *vayiten lifnehem* [sets it before them] and does not delegate the task to a servant. *Vehu omed alehem* [he himself stood by], and he himself waits upon them while they eat."[18] In contrast, Melchizedek seems to be fulfilling his priestly ritual, but without emotional connection or similar urgency. Cohen writes,

> Melchizedek offers bread and wine, which seems a strange form of refreshment. For people who travel through the desert it is not wine, but an abundance of water that is required—which is precisely what Abraham later provides for Hagar and Ishmael before they leave for their long journey. Bread and wine will hardly be relished by someone who is returning from war, who has probably not enjoyed a proper meal for some time, nor had access to sources of fresh water. Compare, then, Melchizedek's meager and inappropriate fare with Abraham's banquet of freshly baked cakes, of the most tender cuts of meat from a calf that he had personally selected, and all this accompanied by milk and curd. Melchizedek's repast was barely a finger snack. Abraham's was a banquet.[19]

[18] J. Cohen, "Abraham's Hospitality," *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 34 no.3 (2006): 169.
[19] Ibid. 169-170

Abraham offers an amazing feast to three men, the presence of God, hastening to provide for his visitors, and doing so graciously and generously. Melchizedek, as a priest of God, has a different goal in offering his bread and wine. As a priest, this food and drink is part of a ritual, not a beacon of neutral hospitality. Whereas Philo reads Abraham in Genesis 18 as an exemplar of piety and welcoming God's presence, King Melchizedek as a priest of *'El 'Elyon*, God Most High provides the minimum food and drink necessary for a ritual eating opportunity. Thus, the passage of Melchizedek's hospitality in Genesis 14 might be better read as a passage of cultic eating, rather than as a hospitable offering.

A2. Genesis 24:24-67 (Laban and Abraham's servant)

After Rebekah graciously provides water for Abraham's servant and camels, she offers her family home as a place for the servant to rest. Rebekah's brother, Laban, comes to find the servant outside. Laban calls him *Baruch Adonai*, blessed one of God, and asks the servant why he remains standing outside since Laban had prepared the house and made room for the camels. Laban, as host, wants to urge the servant into his home. The servant is a bit of a difficult guest, though; rather than quickly accept the hospitality offered to him, he insists on telling his story. He says, *"lo 'ochal ad 'im-dibarti d'varai*—I will not eat until I have spoken my words" (Gen 24:33). Finally, the servant shares his story, telling of the mission his master, Abraham, had sent him on, and trying to discover if Rebekah is truly the destined future wife of his master's son. Laban and Bethuel, Rebekah's brother and father, agree to send Rebekah with Abraham's servant to be a wife for Isaac, because it was God's will. Finally, after the exchange of gifts, the men eat and drink, *vay'oc'lu vayishtu*, before going to sleep. This story is one of hospitality, and it is also one of an agreement between men. Their eating together seals their covenant.

A3. 2 Samuel 17:27-29 (Barzillai and David)

Barzillai the Gileadite from Rogelim offered couches, basins, earthenware, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, honey, curds, a flock, and cheese from the herd for David and his troops to eat. He, along with Shobi son of Nahash and Machir son of Ammiel provide these provisions "for they said that the troops must have grown hungry, faint, and thirsty in the wilderness" (2 Samuel 17:27-29). These generous hosts had reason to support David and his troops, and they did so graciously and bountifully.

In 2 Samuel 19, Barzillai is rewarded for his generosity. There, he is described as having provided the king with food at Mahanaim, *ki 'ish gadol hu m'od*, for he was a very grand, wealthy man. David rewards Barzillai's generosity, inviting Barzillai to cross the Jordan with him, so that David can return the favor of his generosity in Jerusalem. Barzillai rejects David's offer, not seeing the sense in going on such a journey at his age of 80. He refers to his dulled senses, that he is no longer able to differentiate between good and bad, *'im-yit'am et asher 'ochal v'et 'asher 'eshteh*, unable to taste what he eats and drinks, unable to hear the singing of men and women.[20] Barzillai prefers to stay and die near the grave of his parents, rather than be a burden to King David.

A. Conclusion: Straightforward Hospitality

In these passages, hospitality is presented in different ways. In the case of Abraham and the three men, hospitality is a chance to generously and eagerly provide for wayfarers. The *pat lechem*, or morsel of bread, that Abraham offers serves to emphasize his generosity. The biblical narrator emphasizes the eagerness and haste with which Abraham moves, involving his servants and his wife to prepare an elaborate spread for their visitors.

[20] Cf Qohelet 2:8

Alternatively, King Melchizedek presents his visitors with *lechem va'yayin*, bread and wine. While he does come out to great his visitors, he does so with ritual provisions and priestly intentions. His hospitality serves not to satisfy the hunger of those who approach him but to offer food with a blessing.

When Laban comes outside to find the servant of Abraham and greet him, he meets a needy visitor. Rather than accepting the offer of hospitality from the outset, this servant needs a chance to tell his tale. Finally, the men exchange gifts and share a meal, *vay'oc'lu vayishtu*, eating and drinking together.

In the story of Barzillai, the hospitality exchange is slightly different. Wherein the stories of Abraham, Melchizedek, and Laban feature hosts coming out (*hotzi*) to greet their guests, Barzillai and his cohort *higishu l'David*, approach to meet King David with couches, earthenware, and foodstuffs. They present the king and his troops with supplies and food for they anticipate that the troops would have grown hungry and faint in the wilderness.

In all of these straightforward hospitality scenes, the hosts provide what they can for their guests. Each presents a different food, and they exhibit having different motives in their offers of hospitality. Abraham comes to represent the paradigm of hosting, because he welcomes the three visitors as sacred guests without knowing they are the presence of God. Melchizedek brings forth ritual foods to offer to his visitor, because he functions as a priest. Laban shares a meal with Abraham's servant, and their shared food symbolizes their coming to an agreement about Rebekah coming back to be Isaac's wife. Finally, Barzillai and his cohort try to provide for the needs of the king and his army. These straightforward hospitality scenes utilize eating and drinking as a way to demonstrate welcoming, generosity, and relationship. In these scenes, food and drink are media of connection.

B. Water Drawing as Hospitality

In this section, passages involving water drawing will be analyzed. Sometimes women are drawing water, and sometimes men do the drawing. The well is a place of purposeful meeting; when biblical characters meet at the well, their meetings are significant. The scenes analyzed below will feature water drawing not as quotidian function but as setting for prophecy to be fulfilled. All three examples can also be categorized as betrothal type scenes.

B1. Genesis 24:1-24 (Rebekah and Abraham's servant)

In this passage, Abraham enters into a sworn agreement with his servant, and sends forth this servant to find an appropriate wife for Abraham's son, Isaac. The servant takes ten of Abraham's camels toward Nahor, and arrives at a well *l'eit 'erev, l'eit tzeit hasho'avot*, at evening time, the time when women come out to draw water.[21] The servant invokes God, praying for a *na'arah*, a young woman, to offer him and his camels water. This offering of water will be how the servant determines who is the proper eligible woman to marry Isaac. Rebekah, *na'arah tovat mareh m'od, b'tulah, v'ish lo' y'da'ah*, a young woman of beautiful appearance, of marriageable age, whom no man had known, immediately appears. Of course, Rebekah offers her water to Abraham's servant, and then fulfills the servant's previously stated prayer, offering him water and then insisting upon watering his camels. Just as Abraham in Genesis 18, Rebekah hastens, *vat'maheir*, to provide water.

B2. Genesis 28:20-29:35 (Laban and Jacob)

[21] We know from Ugaritic literature that women regularly did this.

In this passage, Jacob flees from his brother, Esau. He leaves Beersheba, and sets out for Haran. He has just awakened from his famous dream of the *sulam*, ladder[22]. As he approaches Haran, Jacob encounters a well, around which flocks are gathering. Just like Rebekah before him, Jacob offers water to the flocks around him once his cousin Rachel and his uncle Laban approach. Upon establishing their familial connections, Laban takes Jacob into his home and asks him what his wages will be. Jacob is taken by Rachel, and offers to serve Laban for 7 years in exchange for his younger daughter. After those 7 years, it comes time for Jacob and Rachel to be married; Laban *vaya'as mishteh*, assembles a feast. This feast is deceptive, because Jacob understands it as the marital feast celebrating his marriage to Rachel. That night, instead of finding shapely Rachel in his bed, he finds her soft-eyed older sister, Leah.

B3. Exodus 2:15-22 (Moses and Jethro)

In this passage, Moses is grown. He has just struck down an Egyptian slavemaster, and he flees from Pharaoh. Once again, the character in question arrives at a well. The priest of Midian, Jethro, has seven daughters. When they come down to the well to water their father's flocks other shepherds come to drive them off, and Moses steps in to water Jethro's flocks. In this gender reversal[23], Moses becomes the water-drawer, like Jacob before him. Jethro's daughters perceive Moses as an Egyptian man. Jethro is upset that his daughters were not hospitable to Moses, and tells them to invite him *veyochal lachem*, to come and eat bread with them. This hospitality leads to Jethro giving his daughter, Zipporah, to Moses as his wife.

---

[22] Probably "stairway" loaned from Akk *simmiltu* with metathesis and dropping of [t].
[23]Deuteronomy 29:9-10 and Joshua 9:22-27 indicate this may be also a statement of class status; water drawers are used in both passages as examples of a lower-class position.

B. Conclusion: Water drawing as Hospitality

In this set of scenes, water drawing is offered as a form of hospitality for visitors. In the first scene, Rebekah offers water to Abraham's servant and his camels, quickly fulfilling the prayer of the servant and, through her actions, marking herself as Isaac's bride-to-be. In the second scene, Jacob offers water to his cousin and uncle. Though in the typical betrothal type scene it is a woman who draws water, here it is a man. His offering of water actually leads to a second scene of hospitality, where Jacob is welcomed into Laban's home, and yet a third scene, at the marital feast of Jacob and Rachel/Leah. Finally, in the third scene, Moses arrives at a well and becomes the one who draws the water for Jethro and his daughters. Together, they eat bread, and the meal eventually turns into a betrothal with Zipporah given to Moses as a wife.

In each of these scenes, water drawing serves as an entry point for future hospitality and betrothals. The drawing of water is a symbol parallel to the offering of food and drink in straightforward hospitality scenes (above); it is a way of beginning a relationship with the person for whom water is being drawn, just as the straightforward hospitality above offered food and drink for the same purpose.

C. Perfidy in Hospitality Contexts

This section will analyze six scenes that feature perfidy in hospitality contexts. In her book, *The Lord's Table*, Gillian Feeley-Harnik writes about the significance of breaking bread together. She writes, "Table fellowship is synonymous with fellowship in all aspects of life[24]" and as my teacher and advisor, Dr. David Sperling, has pointed out, even the word

[24] Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press), 86.

companion[25] suggests a sharing of bread as the core of relationship. As such, perfidy in these hospitality contexts is particularly treacherous.

C1. Genesis 18:20-22 (Lot and the angels; Lot and his daughters)

The story of Lot is a complicated tale of hospitality and inhospitability. Two angels, (presumably two of the same who had just been with Abraham in the previous saga[26]) approach Lot. These angels arrive, and Lot offers them lodging and a place to wash their feet. *Vaya'as lahem mishteh, umatzot afah, vayocheilu*, Lot prepares a meal for them and bakes unleavened bread, and they eat. Suddenly, the men of Sodom come to the house, shouting to Lot and demanding the visitors be brought down *v'nedah 'otam*, that they may be intimate with them. Lot offers his daughters rather than his guests to the Sodomites. With destruction at his doorstep, Lot leaves his house and attempts to rouse his sons-in-law, but they do not heed his warning call. The angels, there to warn Lot of the impending doom, call to Lot for him to escape with his family. His two sons-in-law do not take him seriously. Eventually Lot leaves with his wife and their two unmarried daughters. They flee, and after the annihilation of Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot and his daughters go to live in a cave. Perceiving the destruction of their town as the end of humanity, the daughters believe that their father is the only progenitor left. *Vatashkena et-avihen yayin balaylah*, they make their father drink wine, two nights in a row, so they can become pregnant by him. Lot's two daughters indeed become pregnant, and bear Moab and Ben-ammi, thus becoming the mothers of the Moabites and Ammonites.

---

[25] The etymology of the word, "companion," comes from Middle English: from Old French *compaignon*, literally 'one who breaks bread with another,' based on Latin *com-* 'together with' + *panis* 'bread.

[26] See Hospitality A1 above.

In this story of Lot, there are two different food-related scenes. In the first, Lot offers straightforward hospitality to his angelic visitors. While not as eager as Abraham before him, Lot greets his visitors upon their arrival and puts together a feast for them. This feast serves as a setting wherein characters can be surprised by the mob scene developing outside Lot's abode. The second food related scene features the daughters drugging their father with wine in order to become pregnant by him.

C2. Judges 4 (Yael and Sisera)

In this passage, Deborah pursues Sisera with Barak. Sisera hears about the pursuit, and he orders all of his chariots and men to move. When Barak charges, Sisera flees on foot while all of his men fall by the sword. Sisera, while fleeing, comes upon Yael's tent. *Vateitzei Yael*, Yael comes out to greet him, and welcomes him into the tent. She offers him comfort and a blanket. Though he asks for a small bit of water, *hashqini-na' m'et-mayim, ki tzameiti*, she opens a skin of milk and brings that to him instead of water. She covers him back up with the blanket, and then he assigns her guard duty at the opening of the tent. Opportunistic Yael grabs a mallet and a tent pin, and drives the pin into his temple when he is asleep.

Here, Yael's hospitality begins in a straightforward manner; she welcomes her guest into her home, and offers him more than he requests. This leads to her opportunity to kill him while he sleeps; after all, the prophecy states that Sisera would be delivered into the hands of a woman (and not into Deborah's hands, specifically).

C3. Judges 19 (Levite and his father-in-law)

In this passage, a marital drama turns into an opportunity for warm hospitality. A Levite, whose name is not given, has a concubine from Bethlehem. As the story begins, the

concubine leaves the Levite to return to her father's house. The Levite then treks to his concubine's father's (*chotno avi ha'na'arah)* house. His father-in-law offers him *pat lechem*, a morsel of bread, which is the same humble offer made by Abraham in Genesis 18. The father-in-law wants the Levite man to *s'od-na l'vavecha*, to eat to satiety (literally, "strengthen his heart"). Every time the Levite man tries to leave the home of his father-in-law, his father-in-law says, *"s'od-na l'vavecha*, strengthen your heart," and they sit schmoozing until the day has evaporated before them. Whereas other passages of hospitality note the host's urgency in creating something suitable to eat (*vay'maheir* in Genesis 18 and 24), these two men *vhitmah'mehu*, sit dawdling together, *vayo'chlu shneihem*, and eat together, the two of them. The Levite man and his father-in-law spend several days in the same way: the Levite tries to leave, his father-in-law provides something to eat, and they spend the time together.

Finally, after many such days together, the Levite, his attendant, and his concubine depart. The Levite insists on stopping for the night in Israelite territory, but when they reach their destination, nobody offers to take them in for the night. An old man happens upon the wayfarers in town, and hears their story, at which point the old man brings them into his home, feeds the donkeys, bathes their feet (as in Genesis 18 and 19) and *vayochlu vayishtu*, they eat and drink (Judges 19:21). They enjoy themselves, *meitivim et libam.* Then, in a drastic turn of events, *anshei ha'ir, anshei vnei'v'li'ya'al*, the depraved men of the city arrive at the old man's house. They demand that the wayfarer come out of the house, *v'neidaenu*, that they could be intimate with him. Rather than offer his visitor to this depraved lot, the old man offers his own daughter and the Levite's concubine. The concubine is raped and abused

all night. She makes it back to the old man's house before collapsing, her hands on the threshold of the man's house.

The Levite man tries to rouse her, but she is unresponsive. He puts her atop his donkey, and when he arrives home, he cuts her into twelve parts, and sends them through the territory of Israel.

In his article, "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World," Stuart Lasine writes about this troubling passage. There, he compares and contrasts this passage with those of Lot's hospitality in Genesis 19 and Saul's dismemberment of the oxen in 1 Samuel 11:7. For Lasine, Judges 19 is a case of one-sided literary dependence, wherein

> Judges 19 presupposes the reader's awareness of Genesis 19 in its present form, and depends on that awareness in order to be properly understood. The dependence is 'one-sided' because a reader can fully understand the story of Lot's hospitality in Sodom without knowing the story of the Levite's concubine, whereas the events described in Judges 19 must be viewed together with Genesis 19 for the intended contrast between the two situations to make the reader aware of the topsy-turvy nature of the 'hospitality' in Gibeah.[27]

Reading Judges 19 informed by Genesis 19 would lead readers to draw parallels between the old host and Lot;

> The old host seems oblivious to the fact that his offer of the concubine is 'inhospitable'. He follows Lot's example so precisely that it is almost as though he were following a 'script'. The 'script' calls for two women to be offered to the mob. The host has only one virgin daughter, so he must include the guest's concubine in order to act out his role! Although this characterization of the host's action exaggerates the mechanical way in which his behavior 'follows' Lot's, it does highlight the ludicrous and self-defeating nature of his action, when it is compared to Lot.[28]

It appears that one goal of the author is to show that Gibeah in Benjamin might as well be Sodom.

---

[27] Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* (1984): 38-39.
[28] Ibid. 39

As an example of the role of eating and drinking in biblical narrative, this passage of Judges 19 is in its own right a story of hospitality and inhospitality. It is linked to Genesis 19 and Lot's own failure of hospitality, and features a horrible event following several days of generous hospitality by the father-in-law.

C4. 2 Samuel 11 (David and Uriah) [See E2 below, and Perfidy A6]

In this passage, David sends Joab to attack Rabbah, the capital of Ammon (still called Amman in Jordan) though David himself stays in Jerusalem. From his rooftop, David sees Bathsheba bathing nearby and summons her; she becomes pregnant, and David has to decide what to do about Bathsheba's husband, Uriah. When Uriah arrives, David makes small talk with him, asking how the war is going, and then David instructs Uriah to return to his own home and bathe his feet. It is as if David is inviting Uriah to partake of Uriah's own hospitality. Uriah refuses to return to his house, insisting that it would be inappropriate for him to return home and eat and drink and lay with his wife while Joab and the Ark and Israel and Judah are all out at war. David, of course, needs Uriah to return home and sleep with Bathsheba, so that Uriah won't discover her pregnant with David's child. In verse 13, David summons Uriah again, *vayo'chal lfanav vayesht, vayshakreihu,* and eats and drinks before him, and gets Uriah drunk; his plan (unlike that of Lot's daughters) does not work, and Uriah does not return home to impregnate his pregnant wife.

Here, David's hospitality is not straightforward. He displaces the burden of hospitality onto his guest himself, and then tries to get his guest drunk to manipulate the circumstance for his benefit. Neither usage of eating is successful for David, and he must have Uriah positioned on the front lines of battle such that his death can be guaranteed.

C5. 1 Kings 13:21-22 (Judite man of God and a local prophet)

In this passage, a Judite man of God, *'Ish 'Elohim*, comes to Beth-El. There, he declaims to an altar that Josiah, a son of the line of David, will slaughter the priests of Jeroboam. The king invites the man of God to his house *us'edah*, for sustenance (the same word used in Judges 19—*sa'ad libcha*).The man of God rejects the offer, refusing, saying *lo-to'chal lechem v'lo tishte-mayim*, he will not eat bread (have a meal) or drink water, nor will he return back on the path on which he came to Beth-El. A local prophet hears of this situation, and goes to find the man of God. He finds him, and welcomes him home *ve'echol lachem*, to eat bread/a meal (v. 15). The man of God explicitly states that he is under clear order from God not to eat bread or drink water in that place, nor to return by the path on which he came. The local prophet refutes his case with an updated prophecy, claiming that an angel told him by the same *d'var YHWH*, the command of the Lord to bring the man of God home with him so he can eat and drink. The narrator notes for readers that the local prophet was lying; unaware, the man of God does indeed go back with this local prophet to eat and drink.

At the table, the word of God comes to the local prophet to rebuke the man of God. Because he had not obeyed the word of God, he would be punished, never to arrive at the grave of his fathers. *Vayehi acharei achlo lechem v'acharei sh'toto*, after the man of God has eaten bread and has had something to drink, he leaves, and is promptly killed by a lion. In an uncharacteristic display of restraint, the lion does not eat the man of God (perhaps he had just had lunch); instead, he stands nearby the corpse.

C6. Job 1:7ff (Job's children)

Poor Job. Job had seven sons and three daughters, and his sons had a custom of holding feasts, alternating who would host. They would invite their sisters *le'echol v'lishtot*

'imahem, to eat and drink with them. To note Job's own piety in parenting, the narrator informs readers that Job would make offerings in behalf of his children the mornings after their feasting, just in case they had blasphemed in their thoughts.

The Adversary convinces God to test Job. It is on one of these feast days that the test begins. His sons and daughters *'oclim v'shotim yayim b'vait achihem habchor*, were eating and drinking in the house of the oldest son, and a series of messengers came to tell Job about his children's demise. The feasts become a plot device; they are a comfortable setting, where routine is established, and family comes together around a table. The feasts are manipulated from a place of comfort to a place of danger and destruction as the Adversary seeks to get Job to blaspheme God. Interestingly, at the end of Job's story, everyone he knows comes together *vayo'chlu 'imo lechem be'veito*, to eat bread with him in his home (42:11).

Conclusion: Perfidy in Hospitality Contexts

Each of these scenes exhibits how betrayal, treachery, and manipulation are particularly devastating in the context of hospitality. Because, as Feeley-Harnik writes, "the worst kind of traitor is the traitor with whom one has shared food,"[29] these scenes demonstrate the trust and comfort that should be expected around a shared meal, and what happens when that trust is violated.

In the first scene, Lot is contrasted with Abraham in his offers of hospitality to the angels. His scene of hospitality provides a setting for the invasion of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Hospitality should symbolize safety and comfort, and it is betrayed in this scene. In Lot's second scene, wherein his daughters manipulate their father using wine, eating and drinking provide the tools for inappropriate and incestuous reproduction.

[29] Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*, 86.

In the second scene, Yael fulfills the prophecy of Deborah by killing Sisera. She offers him hospitality, welcomes him into her tent, gives him milk instead of the minimal water he requests. She seizes the opportunity to kill him once he's asleep. Yael's hospitality should symbolize allegiance, but instead comes to provide a setting for her ultimate betrayal.

In the third scene, the Levite and his father-in-law sit and share many meals together. The father-in-law provides the straightforward hospitality and sense of home that the Levite's wife, who left her husband to return to her father's house, does not. Their pattern of sitting and eating together is drastically disrupted once the Levite leaves and happens upon the old man's house in town. There, one finds a reprise of the Sodom and Gomorrah mob scene, with the Levite totally disconnected from his attacked wife. As in the story of Lot and the angels, the hospitality serves as a setting for the disruption.

In the fourth scene, David tries to make Uriah host himself, eating and drinking at home. Eventually, David gets Uriah drunk and unlike in the case of Lot and his daughters, Uriah does not return home to impregnate his wife. David's attempts at manipulating the normal conventions of hospitality fail, and Uriah can only be eliminated in battle.

In the fifth scene, the Judite man of God interacts with a local prophet. The Judite was under strict orders from God not to eat or drink in certain places, but the local prophet offers a false prophecy to get the man of God to eat with him. This lie leads to the man of God being killed (but not eaten) by a lion as soon as he leaves the prophet's house. Hospitality here is an act of dishonesty; the deceptive prophet beguiles the man of God, and it leads to the demise of the true man of God.

In the sixth scene, Job's children are killed during a regularly occurring sibling feast. The siblings gather around a safe, comfortable, abundant table, as they had done so many

times before; by using this as the setting for the children's expiration, the biblical writer is taking a powerful symbol and flipping it, exaggerating the devastation. Bad enough that Job's children be killed—how much the more so that they be killed during a dinner party. Though this is not a traditional scene of perfidy, because it was not the host or hostess who killed a guest, it is a betrayal of the conventions of a hospitality scene. Rather than experiencing a meal in a safe way, the feast is used as a place of danger and devastation.

These six scenes serve as examples of how powerful the symbol of hospitality is, and how grave the misuse and abuse of hospitality can be.

D. Hospitality and Divine Will

These six scenes will serve as examples of how divine will can play a role in hospitality. Whether food is miraculous or ordinary, eaten alone or shared, the divine will can be an impetus or hindrance in a scene where biblical characters are eating or drinking.

D1. 1 Kings 17:1-16 (Elijah and the widow)

In this passage, Elijah is sent by God to go eat, *mehanachal tishteh*, to drink from the wadi, *v'et-ha'or'vim tziviti l'chalkelcha sham*, God had commanded the ravens to provide food for Elijah there. Once he gets to the wadi, the ravens bring him bread and meat every morning and every evening (reminiscent of manna in the wilderness). The wadi eventually dries up, because there is no rain in the land.

This drought provides the backdrop for Elijah's next quest, which is to meet a widow in Zarephath. There, readers find an adaptation of the typical hospitality scene. Elijah finds a widow gathering wood, and he requests her to bring him some water to drink. In response, Yael would have brought milk and Abraham would have brought a feast. Here, though, the widow cannot fulfill his request of *pat lechem*, a morsel of bread, because she has nothing

baked. She has only a small portion of flour in a jar and a small amount of oil. It turns out the wood she is gathering by the entryway to the city is to fuel a fire for her to cook her remaining provisions for herself and her son, *vamatnu*, before they die.

Elijah insists she go home and do as she as said, baking Elijah one last small cake, and one for herself and her son. Because Elijah carries with him the word of God, the flour and oil will last through the end of the drought. She acted according to Elijah's instruction, *vato'chal hi' va'hu' uveitah yamim*, and she and her son and her household ate for many days.

This scene shows how God's will can affect how a hospitality scene plays out. When it is God's will that food be available, food will be available. The reason Elijah is sent to the widow in the first place is because God specially designates her to be the one to feed Elijah; of course, for her to do so, God has to provide food.

D2. 1 Kings 19:1-21 (Elijah and the angel; Elijah and Elisha)

In this passage, Elijah flees from Jezebel after she threatens his life. He journeys out into the wilderness, and prepares to die. After Elijah falls asleep, an angel touches him and says *qum 'echol*, arise and eat. Beside Elijah's head are a cake and a jar of water, *vayo'chal vayesht*, he eats and drinks, and returns to sleep. The angel comes again, and rouses him, telling him to arise and eat once more. This meal brings him enough strength for forty days and forty nights, enough time to get to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Once he arrives at Horeb, Elijah enters a cave to sleep for the night. God's word comes to him, and asks Elijah why he is there. Elijah is zealous for the Lord, and God sends him back the way he came to anoint Hazael and Jehu as kings, and Elisha as his own successor. God will have everyone slain, except 7000 Israelites (who have not worshipped Ba'al).

When Elijah encounters Elisha with his oxen, Elijah puts the yoke on Elisha and walks away. Elisha follows Elijah, and wants to say goodbye to his parents before leaving with his mentor. Then he turns back and slaughters his own oxen, boiling the oxen meat with their gear. Elisha gives this to the people, *vayo'cheilu,* and they eat it. Elisha then goes to serve as apprentice to Elijah.

Elijah feeding the people the oxen and their gear signifies his change in status from plower to prophet.

D3. 2 Kings 4 (Elisha and the Shunamite woman)

In this passage, Elisha is with a woman in dire straits. She is a wife of a disciple of the prophets, and her husband has died; she fears that their creditor would come to collect their children as slaves. Elisha asks her what her assets are, and all she has is a jug of oil. Elisha is able to extend the woman's oil supply until it was sufficient to pay her debts. Here, food is functioning as a divinely provided commodity.

Immediately after this scene, Elisha goes to Shunam, where he would regularly share the company of a wealthy woman. *Vatachazeq-bo le'echol-lachem,* she would urge him to share a meal with her and her husband. *Yasur shamah le'echol-lachem,* whenever he passed by, he would stop there to eat with her. The wealthy woman tells her husband that she wants to make an upstairs apartment for this man of God to stay with them whenever he comes to Shunam.

The woman's regular hospitality leads Elisha to want to pay her back in some way for housing him and providing him with food. He sends his servant to speak with her, and he asks her what she would want, suggesting a military or royal favor. The servant, Gehazi, tells Elisha that the woman has an old husband and no son. Elisha announces to the Shunamite

woman that she will be embracing a son at that season the next year. In this annunciation type scene, the Shunamite woman's hospitality sets a stage for Elisha's prophecy of her future son's birth. Unlike the scene in Genesis 18, the Shunamite woman's son will face a tragic, short life. Readers get a glimpse into Elisha's relationship with God; the prophet recognizes the woman's distress, and remarks that God has hidden it from him, and has not told him (v. 27). Eventually, Elisha is able to bring the boy back to life (by sneezing!).

Elisha leaves the woman's home, and returns to Gilgal, where there is a famine. Elisha immediately tells his servant to cook a stew, *shfot hasir hagdolah uvashil nazid* for the disciples of prophets. The men gather unfamiliar ingredients from the fields, and put them into the stew. *Vayitzqu la'anashim le'echol*, they serve the stew for the men to eat, *vay'hiy k'ochlam meihanazid v'heimah tza'aqu,* and while they were eating from the stew, they cry out, "*mavvet basir*, there is death in this pot,"[30] *v'lo' yachlu le'echol*, and they cannot eat it. Elisha calls to them to fetch some flour, and Elisha neutralizes the stew, making it edible. Then a man from Ba'al-shalisha comes and brings twenty loaves of bread and fresh grains. Elisha wants to serve it to the people, but his attendant notices that there is not enough bread to go around. Elisha knows through the word of God that they will eat and have left over. In 4:44, Elisha is proven correct; when they had eaten, there was some left over.

D4. 2 Kings 6:8-23 (Elisha and Aramean raiders)

In this passage, the king of Aram is waging war against Israel. Elisha, a man of God, sends word to the king of Israel to warn him that the Arameans are on the way. The Aramean king does not like that Elisha knew what he was up to, and tries to have him seized. Elisha

[30] Dr. Sperling notes, "We used to say this about the coffee when I first came to HUC." I would argue that it has not improved much over the years; perhaps we should stir in a ration of flour?

prays to have the Arameans struck with a blinding light, and God does so. Elisha leads them to Samaria, pretending to take them to the man of God they were seeking. The king of Israel wants to take the opportunity to strike down the Arameans, but Elisha tells him instead to *sim lechem vamayim lifneihim*, set bread and water before them, *vayo'chlu vyishtu, vayelchu el adoneihem*, that they should eat and drink and go back to their master. So the king of Israel prepares *keirah g'dolah*, a great feast for them, and they eat, drink, and are sent out to return to their master.

This hospitality is a divine impetus to the king of Aram to stop attacking the Israelites, and it works.

D5. Job 42:11-17 (Job and his new children)

Job's first set of children are killed at the beginning of the narrative while at a sibling feast. Interestingly, at the end of Job's story, everyone he knows comes together *vayo'chlu 'imo lechem be'veito*, to eat bread with him in his home (42:11). This meal of consolation comes immediately before the recounting of Job's aged blessings, which include his new set of children.

This scene, where all of Job's family members gather together in his home to share a meal, is a scene of hospitality and divine will, because of the verses on either side of verse 11. God restored Job's fortunes when he prayed in behalf of his friends, and God gave Job twice what he had before…[consolation meal]…thus the Lord blessed the latter years of Job's life more than the former. This large family gathering, then, is a meal of divine hospitality; returning to the table as a family redeems the feast in Job 1.

D6. Ruth 2 (Ruth and Boaz)

This chapter is the story of Boaz, and how he takes Ruth in. Boaz invokes God (v. 4) before noticing Ruth among the reapers. He quickly welcomes her among the rest of the women, and offers her drawn water when she is out in the fields. At mealtime, he invites Ruth to partake *v'achalt min-halechem v'tavalt piteich bachometz,* to eat from the bread and dip her piece in the vinegar. Ruth is welcomed to the meal fully, not as an outsider. Her place around the communal meal mirrors her place in the reaping community; she is not an outsider, but an insider. Her meal seems to be an initiation into the community.

The story fits into the category of hospitality and divine will, because of the several invocations of God, and in 2:12 the way that Boaz prays Ruth's good deeds be rewarded. In fact, Boaz himself enacts a reward by welcoming Ruth to partake of the meal.

D. Conclusion: Hospitality and Divine Will

These six scenes demonstrate different ways in which the divine will can affect hospitality or the availability of food, from widespread famine to the provision of bread for one person.

In the first scene, God provides food for Elijah by commanding ravens to bring bread and meat twice a day; Elijah's water supply comes from the wadi, which eventually dries up. With the drought, Elijah changes location and finds a divinely appointed widow who is supposed to provide for him. She lacks enough food for herself and her son, let alone a guest. God provides enough flour and oil through a miracle performed by Elijah, allowing the woman and her son to survive the drought. Because it is God's will, sufficient food is provided for prophet and widow alike.

In the second scene, Elijah once more experiences miraculous provisioning. Twice, an angel rouses him to provide nourishment to Elijah in the wilderness. Eventually Elijah

finds Elisha, and in a kind of separation ritual, Elisha boils oxen meat with the oxen's gear, and feeds it to the people before he comes to serve as Elijah's apprentice. Because it is God's will, Elijah is able to survive his trek in the wilderness. When God appoints Elisha as Elijah's successor, a ritual involving eating provides the symbolic change in status for Elisha.

In the third scene, Elisha extends a widow's oil supply so that she can repay her debts. He then goes from an impoverished house to a wealthy one, where he regularly shares meals with a Shunamite woman. Her regular offers of hospitality lead her to be in a kind of relationship with Elisha; Elisha is able miraculously to provide the woman with a child, who later dies and is resuscitated. Elisha goes from the wealthy home to a famine in Gilgal, where he performs another miracle, making the inedible death stew into something palatable and bountiful. In all three of these situations, Elisha's performances of miracles are entwined with the hospitality being offered and received.

In the fourth scene, Elisha manipulates the state of war around him. He encourages the king of Israel to offer hospitality in the form of bread and water to the Arameans, and this feast is enough to send the troops back to their master. Hospitality changes the war, and the Arameans desist from their operations against the Israelites.

In the fifth scene, Job's life is being restored to some of its former riches. Everyone Job knows comes together to eat with him, and he has a new set of children. The family gathering around a festive meal redeems the horrors of Job 1, and is one of the blessings God bestows on Job in the latter half of his life.

In the sixth scene, Boaz welcomes Ruth into his family by offering her to partake fully of the meals he shares with his community. There are invocations of God throughout

the passage, and Boaz prays for Ruth to be rewarded and then fulfills his own prayer by offering her such generous hospitality.

Each of these scenes serves as an example of how divine will and hospitality can be linked in biblical narrative. Prophets can perform God's miracles, providing food to those in need. God can ensure that certain people are sustained, even by having food flown in by ravens. Finally, families mark togetherness around shared meals, and the biblical writer makes sure these meals are seen as divinely orchestrated by invocations of God's name and mention of God's blessings.

E. Refusal of Meals

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, eating and drinking are seen as ways to connect and build relationships. The refusal of meals, then, is significant. Diane Sharon calls the trope of refusing food and drink a powerful narrative tool, citing the several episodes in which "accepting or rejecting food functions symbolically as the acceptance or rejection of love and loyalty."[31] The scenes examined below serve as examples of people refusing meals, and will seek to determine the significance of rejecting food and drink.

E1. 1 Samuel 25 (Nabal and David and Abigail)

In this passage, Samuel dies, and David goes down to the wilderness of Paran. Nabal, a wealthy man, is married to Abigail, an intelligent and beautiful woman. Nabal is a Calebite[32], described in the text as a hard man and evildoer. David sends a group of young

---

[31] D. Sharon, "When Fathers Refuse to Eat: the Trope of Rejecting Food and Drink in Biblical Narrative,"*Semeia* no.86 (1999): 142-43.

[32] BDB offers כלב **n.m. dog** — dog:

a. lit. (all of fierce, hungry dogs, devouring dead bodies and licking blood); eating torn flesh; dog-sacrifice was a heathen rite; in various sim.; in proverbial sayings.

b. applied, fig., to men, in contempt, so of psalmist's enemies, or in excessive

men to meet Nabal and send him a message; they are to tell Nabal that David's men have come on a festive occasion and need provisions. Nabal is incredulous and asks, "*v'laqachti 'et-lachmi v'et meimay v'et tivchati 'asher lzoz'zei, v'natati la'anashim 'asher lo' yadati aiy mizeh hemah?* Am I really going to give my bread and my water and the meat I slaughtered, and give it to men who come from I don't know where?" The servants return to David and inform him, and Abigail hears about what happened. She reasons, they had gone unharmed, why should they not give them food? In v. 18 she gathers bread, wine, sheep, corn, raisin cakes, and cakes of pressed figs, and goes with her servants (without her husband) to meet David and his men. She offers him a bounty of provisions and offers reassurance to David, invoking God. David accepts her offer of foodstuffs, and then Abigail returns home to Nabal. *V'hinei lo mishteh b'veito, kmishteh hamelech v'leiv naval tov 'alav v'ho' shikor 'ed m'od*, she finds him having a feast in his house, a feast fit for a king; Nabal is in a good mood and very drunk. Abigail decides not to tell Nabal anything that night, but she talks to him the next morning, *b'tz'eit hayayin minaval*, once the wine leaves his system about how she had given the provisions to David. Nabal is struck dead by the Lord ten days later, at which point David decides to marry Abigail.

E2. 1 Kings 13:1-10 (Judite man of God) [See Hospitality C5 above]

E3. Daniel 1:5-16 (Daniel and the guard)

In this passage, Daniel refuses to eat his daily rations. The king Jehoiakim orders his officer to bring handsome, flawless, intelligent youths to learn the writings and language of the Chaldeans. They receive rations *mipat-bag hamelech umiyein mishtav*, from the rations of

---

humility; still more emphatically *keleb met a dead dog*; (of misleading prophets); klb was name given to male temple-prostitutes

the king and from the wine he would drink. Daniel is among these youth, and he refuses to eat the king's portions. A guard, whom God disposes to be kind and compassionate toward Daniel, worries that the king will be suspicious if Daniel refuses to eat what is put before him. Daniel requests a trial period, wherein these youth would receive food *min-hazero'im v'no'chlah, umayim v'nishteh,* from seed (legumes) to eat, and water to drink. Daniel wants to prove that this diet would be better than the king's. After ten days, these youth look better than the youth who were eating the king's rations.

Here, food is being used as a tool. Daniel wants to avoid defiling himself by eating of the king's food, so he requests an alternative legume-based diet instead. This is a power play, because it allows him to eat of God's intended food. Daniel strives to avoid contamination by forbidden food.

E4. Leviticus 10 (Aaron and his sons)

In this passage, Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, are consumed by a fire of God (*va'to'chal 'otam*) as punishment for offering a strange, extraneous fire to God. Aaron is famously silent in the aftermath of this event, and Moses begins making orders about what to do next. God then speaks directly to Aaron, forbidding the Aaronide line from drinking wine in the Tent of Meeting. Moses follows with a list of rules regarding the upcoming offering. In Leviticus 10:16-20 it is written, "Then Moses inquired about the goat of sin offering, and it had already been burned! He was angry with Eleazar and Itamar, Aaron's remaining sons, and said, 'Why did you not eat the sin offering in the sacred area? For it is most holy, and He has given it to you to remove the guilt of the community and to make expiation for them before the Lord. Since its blood was not brought inside the sanctuary, you should certainly have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded.' And Aaron spoke to Moses, 'See, this day

they brought their sin offering and their burnt offering before the Lord, and such things have befallen me! Had I eaten sin offering today, would the Lord have approved?' And when Moses heard this, he approved."

Aaron is effectively refusing to eat of the offering to God. In her article, "When Fathers Refuse to Eat: The Trope of Rejecting Food and Drink in Biblical Narrative," Diane M. Sharon studies this passage of Leviticus. She notes that Aaron changes the priestly offering he and his fellow priests are meant to eat into a burnt offering[33].

Aaron is not the only distressed person to refuse a meal in biblical literature, however. Sharon writes,

> Refusing to eat as a signal of a troubled spirit also occurs in the wider context of ancient Near Eastern literature. There, as in the Bible, it is sometimes followed by a resumption of eating once the spirit is soothed. Such reassurance following despair occurs in the biblical example from 1 Samuel 1, where Hannah initially refuses to eat during the family ritual meal (1:7-8). Following her prayer and the blessing by Eli the priest, however, she eats and is no longer sad (1:18b).[34]

This refusal of Aaron to eat of the priestly meal is a significant gesture. In refusing to eat the offering, he is showing his distress (and possibly his fear of the punishment for making a similarly mistaken offering, as did his sons). He is demonstrating that the needs of the community outweigh his own mourning needs, because he remains involved in the cultic procedures. In rejecting to eat this priestly meal, he is effectively refusing to share a meal with God.[35]

E5. 2 Samuel 12:13ff (David)

In this passage, David tells his prophet, Nathan, about his guilt; David has slept with Bathsheba, and she bears a child. Nathan replies that God has remitted David's sin, so David

[33] Sharon, "When Fathers Refuse to Eat,"135.
[34] Ibid. 138
[35] Ibid. 138

himself will not die. However, since David has sinned, the child (who is the product of his illicit union with Bathsheba) will die. God afflicts the child that Uriah's wife has borne to David, and the baby becomes ill. *Vayatzom David tzom*, David fasts, and spends the night on the ground. His staff people desperately try to pry him from the floor, but he refuses to rise, *v'lo' bara' 'itam lachem*, and he will not partake of the food they bring him. He is miserable and worrying his servants. Once the child dies on the seventh day, the servants are anxious about informing David, worrying that David will spiral even further into his wallowing.

Upon hearing about the child's death, though, David rises, anoints himself, changes clothes, goes to prostrate himself before God, and then returns home to eat. His servants think he is deranged! Why fast before the child dies, and then eat so heartily in mourning? Like Aaron, David is a father in mourning; David's response, though, is quite different from Aaron's. In 2 Samuel 12:22-23, it is written, "He replied, 'While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I thought: "Who knows? The Lord may have pity on me, and the child may live." But now that he is dead, why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will never come back to me.'" No longer fasting in supplication, David-as-mourner can eat until sated. After all, fasting cannot bring his child back to life. Sharon notes, "David's behavior foreshadows that of Jehu in 2 Kings 9, who sits down to a meal after Jezebel is pushed to her death, and only when he is finished inquires about her burial arrangements."[36]

David does not fast in mourning, but in supplication. According to Sharon's analysis, "from a literary point of view, the dead child is the product of the forbidden adulterous union, and thus its symbol. With the death of the child, David puts behind him any guilt or shame

[36] Ibid. 141

for what he has done. He picks himself up off the ground and washes his hands of the grime and the crime simultaneously. That done, he can ask for his dinner (2 Samuel 12:20). David's ability to cease grieving the instant he hears his son has died shocks the servants—and, perhaps, the reader."[37] David's mourning involves his own healing and recognition that the death of his child as a punishment for his own sins. Immediately after this passage, David goes to console his wife Bathsheba, and she becomes pregnant with Solomon.

E. Conclusion: Refusal of Meals

These scenes serve as examples of biblical characters refusing meals or rejecting offers of hospitality. In the first scene, Nabal refuses to offer hospitality to David. His wife, Abigail, secretly presents the king and his men with a bounty of foodstuffs, invoking God in the process. Nabal is drunk from his own feasting when Abigail returns home, so she does not tell him that night about what she had done. Nabal is struck dead by God ten days later as punishment and (implicitly) so that Abigail will be available as a wife for David. This scene includes, then, an example of someone refusing to offer hospitality, as well as a generous offer of food and drink.

The second scene initially demonstrates someone refusing to eat. The man of God is commanded not to eat or drink, and he refuses the offers presented to him to break bread. He does not eat until a local prophet deceives the man of God and convinces him to eat. There is also a second refusal to eat: the lion who kills the man of God on the road does not consume the corpse, but stands nearby until the man is found.

[37] Ibid. 145

The third scene shows Daniel refusing the meals presented to him, requesting instead a vegetarian ration. This refusal to eat protects Daniel from defiling himself from eating the king's food, and allows him to follow the appropriate dietary restrictions.

The fourth scene shows a father in mourning refusing to eat. While fasting in mourning is not a biblical convention[38], Aaron does abstain from eating the priestly offering after his sons are taken by God. This refusal to eat is due to Aaron rejecting the opportunity to share a meal with God. Aaron refuses the meal within the parameters of his priestly obligations, though, and the offering is presented to God as a burnt offering.

The fifth scene shows another distraught father. David rejects food while his son, the product of his adulterous union with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, is gravely ill. David fasts up until the point of the child's death, at which point he returns home to eat heartily. David rejects food in supplication, hoping that his abstention from food will signal his regret to God. Once the child is dead, David recognizes the futility of fasting, knowing that refusing to eat will not bring his child back to life.

Each of these scenes demonstrates how different biblical figures refuse to eat or drink, or refuse to offer appropriate hospitality.

Conclusion: Hospitality

Hospitality in the Hebrew Bible can be used as a powerful symbol. When utilized in a straightforward way, hospitality is a setting for people to come together in relationship. Sharing food and drink and drawing water for people and animals are ways of demonstrating allegiance, generosity, and welcoming. Because of the salience of the symbol of hospitality,

[38] See Sharon "When Fathers Refuse to Eat," 142, where she writes, "Fasting is not a normative expression of grief in the Hebrew Bible."

biblical writers are able to adapt and manipulate the typical conventions of hospitality to exaggerate the devastation and betrayal of interactions and relationships between characters. God's will plays an important role in some hospitality scenes, providing miraculous food and drink for divinely appointed people. Finally, the refusal to accept or offer hospitality is significant, though its symbolism does vary.

Covenant

Introduction:

Food and drink play many roles in the corpus of biblical literature. One of the ways that food and drink are used in narrative is in the sealing of covenants between two human parties, and between humans and God. Dr. David Sperling writes, "the language of a *brit* serves fictitiously to create a familial relation,"[39] and throughout these passages, actual and fictitious family relationships will be created through covenantal eating. Eating and drinking serve as symbolic actions that enact the relationship expressed by the terms of the presented covenant. Eating together seals a covenant, and "refusal to eat together severs the relationship."[40]

The use of food and drink is symbolic in various types of covenants. Partaking in shared meals creates a bond between parties, and can indicate kinship or marital relationships. In her book, *The Lord's Table: The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity,* Gillian Feely-Harnik studies the various ways food and drink serve as symbol. Citing William Robertson Smith, she writes,

> The very act of eating and drinking with a man was a symbol and a confirmation of fellowship and mutual social obligations. The one thing directly expressed in the sacrificial meal is that the god and his worshippers are *commensals*, but every other point in their mutual relations is included in what this involves. Those who sit at meat together are united for all social effects, those who do not eat together are aliens to one another, without fellowship in religion and without reciprocal social duties[41]. [Emphasis original]

This passage serves as an important guide to analyzing the use of eating and drinking in scenes where covenants are created or broken in biblical literature. When biblical figures

---

[39] David Sperling, "Rethinking Covenant in Late Biblical Books," *Biblica* 70 no. 1 (1989): 66.
[40] Feely-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*, 86.
[41] Ibid. 11

share meals together within the context of creating covenants, their meal is highly significant, even if it is meager in its contents. Eating together and being in covenantal relationship together are closely linked. This passage will serve to examine several biblical passages wherein eating is done in the context of covenantal relationship.

A. Interpersonal Covenants

In this first section, several scenes that involve interpersonal covenants will be analyzed. Sometimes these covenantal relationships are between two men making a peace treaty; other times, they will be scenes where the patriarchal representatives arrange future marriage agreements. These scenes are just a few selections from a larger set of narrative passages; see the section on Water drawing as Hospitality [Hospitality B] for more examples.

A1. Genesis 26:26-33 (Isaac and Abimelech)

In this passage, Abimelech and Isaac make a covenant with each other. In the aftermath of Isaac's wife-as-sister plot with Abimelech, the king had warned the people against harming Isaac and Rebekah, and they leave the area. Despite the king implicitly casting them out, they become very wealthy. The local Philistines have stopped up all of Abraham's wells with earth. Isaac goes about, re-digging his father Abraham's wells, and giving them the same names his father had before him. Isaac has a night vision, and God tells Isaac that God will bless him. Then, Abimelech comes and finds Isaac. Isaac inquires why the king and his men would come to him and Rebekah, when they have been driven out. The king sees that God has been with the couple, and seeks to form a pact with Isaac, saying, "*vnich'r'tah vrit 'imach*, let us cut a covenant with you" (v. 28) Abimelech wants both parties to leave each other in peace. *Va'ya'as lahem mishteh vay'chlu vayishtu*, (v. 30) He

throws a feast for them, and they eat and drink. The next morning, they exchange oaths, and the king and his men depart from Isaac and Rebekah in peace.

The eating in this passage serves as a substance over which two human parties are able to form a covenant together. In fact, in 26:31 when the men wake up, the biblical narrator writes, "*vayyishav'u 'ish l'achiv*—each man exchanged an oath with his brother.[42]" There is no invocation of God in their pact or over the food they share, though the scene does follow a prophetic night vision. The shared food brings the men together as brothers in covenant.

A2. Genesis 31:43-48 (Jacob and Laban)

This passage follows a dreadful experience between a man and his father-in-law. In 31:3 God tells Jacob to return to the land of his fathers, setting out from Laban's home. By verse 16, Jacob has convinced his wives to leave home with him. They pack up their belongings and their animals, and Rachel steals her father's idols. Jacob and his wives have packed in secret, and they leave without telling Laban. Finally, Laban is informed on the third day about their flight. He catches up with his son-in-law and daughters feeling hurt by their deceptive action. Laban tells Jacob he would have sent them off in the proper way, and he is upset that he has missed the chance to kiss his family goodbye. Laban seeks his idols, and ransacks all that is Jacob's to find them. Jacob calls to mind all of the good things he has done for Laban, from taking care of the flocks to putting up with Laban's manipulation and wage changing.

In verse 44, Laban proposes to Jacob that they make a pact, or covenant, *l'cha nicr'tah vrit*, and Jacob sets up a pillar to mark the space. Jacob has his men gather stones

[42] NJPS, NRSV, REB, NKJV all miss this nuance completely.

into a mound, *va'yochlu sham*, and they eat there. The mound gets three names (Yegar-sahaduta, Gal-ed, and Mizpah). Jacob invokes God (v. 52) and then offers a sacrifice and calls to his brothers *le'echol-lachem, vayo'chlu lechem* to eat bread, and they do so. In the morning, Laban finally gets to kiss his children goodbye, and leaves.

This passage is different than the interpersonal covenant in Genesis 26, but it does feature a similar pattern: two human parties come together, form a *brit*, and share some sort of food.

A3. Exodus 18:11 (Jethro)

In this section, Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, comes to visit Moses, and hears of the Israelites' travails in Egypt under Pharaoh. Jethro offers a blessing to God, announcing his own acknowledgement that the God of the Israelites is greater than all other gods. He then brings a burnt offering and sacrifices, and Aaron and the elders of Israel come *le'echol-lechem 'im-chotein Moshe lifnei ha'elohim*, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. In his article "Abraham's Hospitality," Jeffrey Cohen analyzes the passages of Genesis 14 and 18. He writes,

> Eating bread is well attested as a celebration of the ratification of a spiritual covenant or initiation into religious fellowship. Hence the conversion[43] of Jethro, represented by his formal and public confession that God is greater than all the other gods (Ex 18:11), is immediately followed by a ritual eating of bread before God in the presence of Aaron and all the elders of Israel (v.12). The meal symbolized fraternity; and, by association, the word *lechem* [bread] assimilated the meaning of "kith and kin" as in the phrase *lachm'kha yasimu mazor tahtekha* [your own kith and kin lay a snare at your feet" (Obadiah 1:7)[44]

Jethro, then, is understood as sealing his covenantal relationship with Moses and the Israelites by recognizing their god as supreme and, critically, by eating bread with the

[43] For the rabbis this is a conversion. Actually, it is a motif of the gentile endorsement of the power of the Hebrew god. Cf. Josh 2:9-11.
[44] Cohen, "Abraham's Hospitality," 171.

community before God. Though Jethro is already kin by dint of being Moses' father-in-law, this meal is a symbolic ritual act of eating that brings Jethro into the kin of the community[45].

A. Conclusion: Interpersonal Covenants

This section examines several examples of interpersonal covenants and the way eating and drinking serve as symbols in the creation of covenantal relationships.

In the first passage, Abimelech and Isaac make a covenant of peace with each other. *Va'ya'as lahem mishteh vay'chlu vayishtu,* Abimelech throws a feast for them, and they eat and drink together. The exchange of oaths happens the morning after the feast, and they leave each other in peace. The eating is the symbolic way to connect the two parties and make the covenant binding.

In the second passage, Jacob and Laban make a covenant of reconciliation. *Vayo'chlu lechem,* they eat bread together with the brothers, and they are able to leave each other peacefully.

In the third passage, Jethro partakes in a shared cultic meal with the Israelite priests and elders. In doing so, he affirms his recognition of the power of the Hebrew god.

B. Classical Covenants

In this section, the paradigmatic classical covenant of Exodus 24 will be analyzed. Additionally, the covenant promised to Abraham and reiterated at Sinai that is redeemed in Joshua 5 will be analyzed. There, the paschal sacrifice is offered after the Israelites are circumcised en masse, and the Israelites transition from manna to the food they can find in Israel.

---

[45] Or it can be read as an allegory of Midianite-Israelite alliance. Either way, there is a relationship being formed through shared eating.

B1. Exodus 24 (Sinai) Cf. Matt 26:26-29

In this passage, Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel are told to come before God; only Moses can come near to God. Moses writes down the commandments of God, and then there is a large burnt offering. Blood is splashed into basins and against the altar, and the people confirm their commitment to the covenant with God. Then, the elders, Moses, and Aaron with his sons ascend toward God. Though only Moses is technically allowed to approach God, the biblical narrator notes that all of them behold God, and God does not strike them. *Va'echezu 'et-ha'elohim vayo'chlu vayishtu*; they behold God, and they eat and drink.

In this covenant, there are two different eating events happening. One is implicit; the Israelites partake of the burnt offering. The other eating is that of the Israelite elite eating on the mountain after beholding God's presence. Their eating is part of a classical covenant, between God and Israel.

This use of covenantal eating is not exclusive to the Hebrew Bible; an examination of other Ancient Near Eastern literatures would likely reveal parallel paradigms for sealing and creating covenants. Furthermore, the author of Matthew, inspired by Exodus 24, has Jesus initiate his new covenant through an act of group eating. In Matt 26:26-28, it is written, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."[46] For Jesus and his disciples, eating holds deep significance.

[46] KJVS

Their ingesting of the symbolic body and blood of Jesus demonstrates their acceptance of the new testament or covenant.

B2. Joshua 5:10-12 (Gilgal)

In this passage, Joshua and the Israelites are encamped in the wilderness. There is a mass circumcision, and once the men recover, they offer the Pesach sacrifice. That sacrifice marks a critical transition between the divinely supplied manna and having to find their food in the yield of the land. They no longer require the manna of the wilderness, because they have reached the Promised Land, and can eat the produce thereof.

B. Conclusion: Classical Covenants

The passage of Exodus 24 is the paradigm of the classical covenant. There, several symbolic actions transpire: Moses writes down the commandments, an altar is set up, and burnt offerings and animal sacrifices are brought before blood is saved in basins and splashed against the altar. Finally, the covenant is read aloud and the people are dashed with blood.

While this same set of symbolic actions is not found in the Joshua passage, there is a significant change in eating. Rather than eating the burnt offerings of Sinai, the Israelites (once in the land of Israel) offer the paschal sacrifice and make the transition from eating the manna to eating the produce of the land of Israel.

C. Reversal of Classic Covenants

There is one critical passage of biblical literature wherein the paradigm of the classical covenant as depicted in Exodus 24 is reversed. This reversal serves to manipulate the paradigm, exaggerating the inappropriate behavior of the Israelites.

C1. Exodus 32 (Golden Calf)

In the classic covenant, a *brit* is cut, and cultically appropriate food is offered or eaten. In this passage, however, the Israelites break their covenant with God when they make the golden calf. When Moses descends from the mountain and finds the Israelites dancing and shouting, he smashes the tablets he had just received. He takes the calf that the Israelites have made, burns it, grinds it to a powder, *vayyizer ‘al-p’nei hamayim, vayashq ‘et-bnei yisrael*, and scatters the powder on top of the water and makes the Israelites drink it. Rather than accept the covenant being offered to Moses and offering a cultically appropriate food to God, the Israelites create their own idol and partake of the inappropriate and unsanctioned fruits of their labors mixed into water. This is an inversion of the classic covenant.

This use of the material of their idol being digested can be read in light of the Sotah protocol in Numbers 5:11-31. In this non-narrative legal passage, God reveals to Moses the appropriate protocol for handling women who commit adultery, or who are suspected of having done so. These women are to be brought before the priest, and the priest will combine holy water and dust from the ground of the tabernacle, which become embittering bitter waters *mei hamarim ham’ararim* (v. 18). The priest will say a script of performative speech, which explains the way these bitter waters function. He is to make the woman drink the water of bitterness that induces the spell, so that the spell-inducing water may enter into her to bring on bitterness (v. 24). This is one way in which humans utilize drinking to establish legal status in their community.

C. Conclusion: Reversal of Classic Covenants

By inverting the paradigm of the classic covenant, the biblical writer of the episode of the golden calf is able to emphasize just how inappropriate is the behavior of the Israelites. Rather than eat a cultically required meal, the Israelites are forced to ingest the burnt powder

of their idolatrous creation. As in the Sotah passage in Numbers 5, ingesting the mixed potion serves as a symbolic processing of guilt.

D. Post-exilic New Covenant

There is one narrative of a parallel covenant in the post-exilic story. Nehemiah 8 shows the people assembling to hear the scroll of the teaching of Moses read aloud. The people then eat, but it is not the sacrificial meal publicly consumed of the Sinai covenant; the meal is eaten privately instead.

D1. Nehemiah 8:10ff

In this passage, the people assemble, and Ezra brings the scroll of the Teaching of Moses to read it and teach it. In verse 10, Nehemiah tells the people "*l'chu, 'ichlu mashmanim u'shtu mamtaqim*, eat choice foods and drink sweet drinks, and send portions to whoever has nothing prepared, for the day is holy to our God." In the classic covenant at Sinai, food is publically eaten as a community. In the post-exilic culture of Nehemiah 8, food is eaten privately instead of publicly. It seems that the pattern for eating in private homes instead of as a larger community might reflect the nature of the eating culture of the community in the exile. While there is no explicit covenant mentioned[47], the parallel here is the public reading of the scroll of the Teaching of Moses (as Exodus 24 involves Moses' tablets) and the command to eat.

E. Eating the Word of God

Though not necessarily a straightforward case of interpersonal or human-divine covenant, Ezekiel 2-3 depicts God telling the prophet to physically eat the words God has

[47] For more on how Ezra-Nehemia uses *brit*, see David Sperling's "Rethinking Covenant in Late Biblical Books," *Biblica* 70 no.1 (1989), 52-59.

presented to him on a scroll. God's word is equated to food. In the second passage, God commands Ezekiel to bake grains into a cake, but again the process is symbolic.

E1. Ezek 3:1-9

In this passage, God speaks to Ezekiel regarding the people of Israel, who have rebelled against God. In Ezek 2:8 God tells Ezekiel *"ptzei ficha ve'echol 'et 'asher-'ani notein 'elecha,* Open your mouth and eat what I am giving you." God presents Ezekiel with a scroll, filled with dirges. God continues, "*ben-'adam, 'et 'asher timtza' 'echol, 'echol 'et-ham'gilah hazot,* mortal, eat what you are presented with, eat this scroll" and Ezekiel opens his mouth. God puts the scroll in his mouth, and tells Ezekiel to fill his belly with the scroll. Ezekiel reports, "*vat'hi bfi kid'vash l'matoq,* to my mouth, it tasted as sweet as honey" (3:3). God's word is equated with food. Eating the word of God is a way for Ezekiel to internalize God's word physically, such that he can adequately communicate God's message to such a rebellious and troublesome people.

E2. Ezekiel 4:9-17

In this passage, God instructs Ezekiel to besiege the Israelites in punishment. In God's instructions, Ezekiel is told, "'Further, take wheat, barley, beans, lentils, millet, and emmer. Put them into one vessel and bake them into bread. Eat it as many days as you lie on your side: three hundred and ninety. The food that you eat shall be by weight, twenty shekels a day; this you shall eat in the space of a day. And you shall drink water by measure; drink a sixth of a *hin* in the space of a day. Eat it as a barley cake; you shall bake it on human excrement before their eyes. So,' said the Lord, 'shall the people of Israel eat their bread, unclean, among the nations to which I will banish them'" (Ezek. 4:9-13).

Here, Ezekiel is instructed to bake bread on human excrement and feed it to the people of Israel. God gives Ezekiel a vision of the siege of Jerusalem through the symbol of an unclean meal. This image is related to the faithless Israelites of Isaiah 65:11 setting a table for Fortune and filling cups of mixed wine for Destiny, instead of regularly scheduled and observed meals eaten before God[48].

E. Conclusion: Eating the Word of God

These two passages from Ezekiel demonstrate different ways eating is depicted in prophetic literature. Though these are not straightforward covenantal contexts, they are interactions between God and his prophet. In the first passage, Ezekiel eats the scroll of God's words; they are ingestible and sweet as honey. In the second passage, though, the unclean food preparation is meant to symbolize the faithless Israelites and the fault of their actions.

Conclusion: Covenant

Covenants can be made interpersonally or between God and humans. In either case, eating and drinking can be symbolic actions that indicate the sealing of a covenant. Additionally, in situations where covenants are being broken or disregarded, inappropriate eating can signal the rejection of a covenant. In interpersonal covenants, the sharing of a meal symbolizes the agreement to either abide by agreed upon terms or to serve as partners. The sharing of food symbolizes full agreement and transforms the partnership to pseudo-kinship (if not full kinship, in the case of marital agreements).

Because the sharing of food is such a strong symbol, eating is also a component of divine-human covenantal agreements. Food is offered in sacrificial form and shared among

[48] Cf. Exod. 18:12, Deut. 12:7

human participants in the covenant. When humans wish to reject a divine covenant, they partake of inappropriate or unauthorized eating, or must eat of the fruits of their idolatrous labors. Food is also utilized in non-covenantal depictions of human-divine relationships (as in Ezekiel).

Though the sealing of covenantal agreements is a multipart process, eating serves as one critical symbolic action. Paradigms are presented and followed *and* manipulated, allowing biblical writers to emphasize the strength of the covenantal relationships. Eating together (or offering food sacrificially) is a way to symbolize the strongest of relationships. Eating together brings people from two separate parties to one family-esque unit.

Miracles

Introduction:

Within the corpus of biblical literature, eating and drinking is performed by humans but can be encouraged or provided for by God directly or by God's messengers. Eating and drinking, famine and drought, and times of bountiful abundance all have literary function *and* sometimes serve as variables symbolizing miraculous reassurance. That is to say, not all miracles are food related, and not all miraculous reassurance takes the form of food. This chapter will present and analyze several scenes wherein eating and drinking serve as miraculous reassurance.

A. Elijah and Elisha

In this first subsection, there will be several scenes featuring Elijah and Elisha, and the way that miracles affect their access to food and drink.

A1. 1 Kings 17:6 (Elijah and the ravens)

In this passage, Elijah is fleeing in fear of Jezebel; this scene is immediately before Elijah meets the widow [see Hospitality D1]. God ensures that ravens will bring Elijah provisions of *lechem u'vasar ba'arev*, bread and meat in the evening. This echoes Exodus 16:8 ("Since it is the Lord," Moses continued, "who will give you flesh to eat in the evening and bread in the morning to the full, because the Lord has heard the grumblings you utter against Him, what is our part? Your grumbling is not against us, but against the Lord!") and Exodus 16:12 ("I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Speak to them and say: By evening you shall eat flesh, and in the morning you shall have your fill of bread; and you shall know that I the Lord am your God). Elijah is sustained by the divinely-appointed ravens

that bring him bread and meat at regular times, just as the Israelites are sustained by the manna of Exodus 16.

A2. 1 Kings 17:12-16 (Elijah and the widow) [See Hospitality D1]

In this passage, Elijah interacts with a widow in Zarephath. Elijah is sent by God to go east *mehanachal tishteh*, to drink from the wadi, *v'et-ha'or'vim tziviti l'chalkelcha sham*, for God has commanded the ravens to provide food for Elijah there. Once Elijah gets to the wadi, the ravens bring him bread and meat every morning and every evening (reminiscent of the manna). The wadi eventually dries up, because there is no rain in the land.

This drought provides the backdrop for Elijah's next quest, which is to meet a widow in Zarephath. There, readers find an adaptation of the typical hospitality scene. Elijah finds a widow gathering wood, and he requests her to bring him some water to drink. In response, Yael would have brought milk, Abraham would have brought a feast. Here, the widow cannot fulfill his request of *pat lechem*, a morsel of bread, because she has nothing baked, only a small portion of flour in a jar and a small amount of oil. It turns out the wood she is gathering by the entryway to the city is to fuel a fire for her to cook her remaining provisions on for herself and her son, *vamatnu*, before they die.

Elijah insists she go home and do as she as said, baking Elijah one last small cake, and one for herself and her son, because Elijah carries with him the word of God, that the flour and oil will last through the end of the drought. She acts according to Elijah's instruction, *vato'chal hi' va'hu' uveitah yamim*, and she and her son and her household eat for many days.

This scene shows how God's will can affect how a hospitality scene plays out. When it is God's will that food be available, food will be available. The reason Elijah is sent to the

widow in the first place is because God specially designated her to be the one to feed Elijah; of course, for her to do so, God would have to provide food.

In addition to a scene of hospitality, this setting is an example of how eating and drinking are part of larger context of miracles. Here, Elijah is able to enact a miracle of God by extending the widow's supplies to last her throughout the famine. In verse 9, God tells Elijah that this widow was specially designated *lchalk'lecha*, to feed him. Because there is a famine in the land, it is only because of God's miracle that the woman is able to feed herself, her son, and Elijah.

This miracle serves to fulfill God's word (as confirmed in 17:16) and creates a relationship between the widow and Elijah of hostess and guest; this comes into play in verse 20, when the child falls ill and Elijah speaks out against God. This allows Elijah to perform another of God's miracles, and to prove his prophetic worth and connection with God to the widow.

A3. 2 Kings 2:16-24 (Elisha)

In this passage, Elijah has just been taken up to the heavens in a fiery storm, and Elisha has put on his mantle. Elisha is in Jericho, where the men of the town inform him that it is a nice and pleasant dwelling place, but *hamayim ra'im v'ha'aretz m'shakalet*, the water is bad and the land causes bereavement. Elisha requests a new dish with salt in it; he goes to *motza' hamayim*, the spring, and casts the *melach*, salt, into it. Invoking God, Elisha proclaims *ripi'ti lamayim ha'eleh*, I have healed the water so it shall no longer cause death. The biblical narrator continues by noting that the water remains healed to this day, according to what Elisha had proclaimed.

This passage is one of several narrative scenes where water is sweetened or food is neutralized to be suitable for ingesting (see for example 2 Kings 4:38ff, Exodus 15:22ff). Elisha makes the water safe for consumption, and, in doing so, enacts his first prophetic task after the mantle of Elijah passed down to him.

A4. 2 Kings 4:38-44 (Elisha)

In this passage, Elisha goes to Shunam, where he would regularly share the company of a wealthy woman. *Vatachazeq-bo le'echol-lachem*, she would urge him to share a meal with her and her husband. *Yasur shamah le'echol-lachem*, whenever he passed by, he would stop there to eat with her. The wealthy woman tells her husband that she wants to make an upstairs apartment for this man of God to stay by them when he came into Shunam.

Her regular hospitality leads Elisha to want to pay her back in some way for her housing him and providing him with food. He sends his servant to speak with her, and he asks her what she would want, suggesting a military or royal favor. The servant, Gehazi, tells Elisha that the woman has an old husband and no son. Elisha announces to the Shunamite woman that she will be embracing a son at that season the next year. In this annunciation type scene, the Shunamite woman's hospitality sets a stage for Elisha's prophecy of her future son's birth. Unlike in the scene in Genesis 18, the Shunamite woman's son will face a tragic, short life. Readers get a glimpse into Elisha's relationship with God. Elisha recognizes the woman's distress, and remarks that God has hidden it from him, and has not told him (v. 27). Eventually, Elisha is able to bring the boy back to life (by sneezing!).

Elisha leaves the woman's home and returns to Gilgal, where there is a famine. Elisha immediately tells his servant to cook a stew, *shfot hasir hagdolah uvashil nazid* for the disciples of prophets. The men gather unfamiliar ingredients from the fields, and put them

into the stew. *Vayitzqu la'anashim le'echol*, they serve the stew for the men to eat, *vay'hiy k'ochlam meihanazid v'heimah tza'aqu*, and while they were eating from the stew, they cry out, *mavvet basir*, there is death in this pot, *v'lo' yachlu le'echol*, and they cannot eat it. Elisha calls to them to fetch some flour, and Elisha is able to neutralize the stew, making it edible. Then a man from Ba'al-shalisha came, bringing twenty loaves of bread and fresh grains. Elisha wants to serve it to the people, but his attendant notices that there is not enough bread to go around. Elisha knows the word of God that they will eat and have left over. In 4:44, Elisha is correct; when they had eaten, there was some left over[49].

This passage is not only an example of hospitality; it is an example of how eating and drinking function as a part of miraculous scenes. In 4:38-44, Elisha takes the bizarre death gourds and makes them edible. As in the scene in 2 Kings 2, Elisha sprinkles something; here, it is flour, but above, it was salt. This sprinkling miraculously neutralizes the deathly stew so that the people are able to eat to their fill.

A5. 2 Kings 4:1-7 (Elisha and the widow)

In this passage, Elisha is with a woman in dire straits. She is a wife of a disciple of the prophets, and her husband has died; she fears their creditor will come to collect their children as slaves. Elisha asks her what her assets are, and all she has is a jug of oil. Elisha is able to extend the woman's oil supply until it is sufficient to pay her debts. Here, food is functioning as a divinely provided commodity.

This is another example of how foodstuffs are affected by miracles involving prophets, even though the scene does not explicitly depict anyone eating the miraculously extended oil. Without the miracle, the widow would have had no collateral but for her children.

---

[49] Cf. Matt 14:15-21

A. Conclusion: Elijah and Elisha

These scenes serve as examples of when Elijah and Elisha enact God's miracles to neutralize inedible food and undrinkable water, or to provide or extend the available food supplies.

In the first scene, God appoints a raven to provide regular rations of bread and meat, so that Elijah can survive his journey in the wilderness when he flees from Jezebel. The miraculous provision of food is a parallel to the manna of Exodus 16, but on a much smaller scale.

In the second scene, the drought is a plot impetus, not a divine punishment. Elijah meets a woman, who cannot offer hospitality as typical biblical conventions would dictate. Elijah is able to make her meager provisions last throughout the drought, because God had designated this particular woman as the source for Elijah's food and drink for the same period of time.

In the third scene, Elisha enacts his first task as a prophet by sprinkling salt into water to heal it, making it drinkable for the people there. This act is significant, because it is the first time Elisha is acting as prophet after Elijah is taken up in the fiery storm.

In the fourth scene, Elisha once more neutralizes a problematic food to make it palatable. Instead of using salt to heal water, he uses flour to fix a stew and then miraculously extends the limited quantity of stew to be sufficient for the very large group of eaters.

In the fifth scene, Elisha is able to increase the amount of oil that a woman has, to protect her and her family from incoming creditors. Though nobody is explicitly eating the oil, its economic function is tied to its edible quality, and it is critical she be able to pay her debts.

While these are not all of the scenes wherein Elijah and Elisha are engaged in the miraculous work of affecting food supplies or characteristics, these scenes do demonstrate the way prophets can serve God and be served by divinely appointed people. God is able to provide food and drink for the people whom God chooses.

B. Other Miraculous Food Encounters

Elijah and Elisha are not the only prophets or biblical figures who experience miraculously provided food and drink. These two scenes below serve as examples of other biblical figures and the way prophets can miraculous impact food, or how food can be miraculously provided for a person in need.

B1. Exodus 15:22-26 (Moses at Marah)

In this passage, Moses takes the Israelites away from the Sea of Reeds and into the wilderness. There, they find no water, even after three days. When they arrive at Marah (bitter), they cannot drink the bitter water, *ki marim hem*, because the waters are bitter. God shows Moses a piece of wood, which Moses throws into the water, *vayimt'qu hamayim*, and the waters become sweet.

B2. Genesis 21:14ff (Hagar at El Roi)

In this passage featuring Hagar, God hears Ishmael crying, and sends an angel to speak with her. Abraham had given Hagar *lechem v'chemat mayim*, bread and a skin of water, before casting her out into the wilderness. In the wilderness, she and her son drink all of the water, and she leaves him under one of the bushes. She cannot bear to watch her son die of thirst. God heeds the cry of the boy (not the cry of Hagar), and God opens Hagar's eyes, so she sees a well of water. There, she is able to fill a skin of water, and let her son drink.

B. Conclusion: Other Miraculous Food Encounters

In the first scene, Moses is able to sweeten bitter waters by using the tools supplied by God; namely, the appointed stick is cast into the water, taking the bitter waters and making them sweet. In the second scene, Hagar is in the wilderness and God provides for her needs by opening Hagar's eyes, allowing her to see the water well before her. Though the text is ambiguous as to whether the well has been there all along, or whether God creates the well and then opens Hagar's eyes to it, it is clear that this is a text where God is providing Hagar water during her time of need.

Conclusion: Miracles

Eating and drinking contexts are perfect places for miracles to arise. When a biblical figure is in need of food or drink, who is a better provider of those necessities than God? God's prophets, Elijah and Elisha, experience miraculous feeding throughout their times of service to God. Whether God sends a raven with provisions, or a woman who has, herself, encountered difficult times of hunger, Elijah and Elisha have divine intervention when it comes to their foodstuff. The larger population of Israelites is also party to God's provision, as in the case of the waters at Marah and when Hagar has her eyes opened to the well before her. Times of hunger and need are excellent narrative contexts for miraculous provision of food and drink.

Perfidy

Introduction

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, there are many interactions between biblical figures that involve perfidy in some form. From deception to trickery, betrayal to infidelity, there is no shortage of deceitfulness in the corpus of biblical literature. Scenes that involve eating and drinking are excellent contexts for perfidy in its various forms; because eating together is a symbol of allegiance, perfidy in eating contexts is particularly treacherous. This section will present and analyze scenes of deception, betrayal/treachery, circumstances where perfidy of some form and God's will interact, scenes of coercion, and circumstances of misfortune and famine.

A. Deception

A1. Genesis 25:27-34 (Jacob and Esau)[50]

In this passage, Jacob and Esau are grown. The biblical author notes that the reason Isaac has a favorite son is because of Esau's ability to provide food that satisfies his father's taste for game. Jacob, hoping to receive his brother's birthright blessing, cooks a stew while Esau is in the field hunting for game. *Vayazed ya'aqov nazid*, Jacob was stewing a stew (v. 29), and Esau says to him, "*Hal'iteini na' min-ha'adom ha'adom hazeh*—give me some of that red stuff to gulp down." Esau is desperately hungry, having returned apparently empty-handed from his hunting trip. Jacob is stewing a stew of deception; even the Hebrew word *meizid* can be one who sins knowingly and willfully[51].

---

[50] For an accompanying recipe, please see Appendix B.

[51] BDB, zwd] vb. boil up, seethe, act proudly, presumptuously, rebelliously — Qal of Egyptians.
Hiph. 1. *boil*, *seethe*, trans.
2. *act presumptuously*, *insolently*; wickedness; with qualified noun expressed only.

Even if Jacob is innocently making his stew with himself as the sole intended eater, the wordplay here can lead to a reading of his stew making as a deceitful act. Jacob's stew of deception is valuable enough for Esau, and he spurns his birthright in exchange for the red stuff. Esau eats *lachem un'zid 'edashim vayo'chal vayesht*, the bread and lentil stew. He eats and drinks, then gets up and leaves, thus spurning his *b'chorah*, birthright blessing.

Here, food is the commodity being used to manipulate a situation. Jacob wants to receive the blessing due his firstborn brother. By deceivingly stewing a lentil stew, a red stuff, Jacob is able to get his brother to spurn his birthright, rejecting it and trading it for a bowl of something to revive his spirits.

A2. Genesis 27 (Jacob and Esau)

In this passage, Jacob is able to triumph over his brother, Esau, by deceiving his father with the help of his mother. Isaac calls to his elder son, requesting "*mat'amim ca'asher 'ahavti, vhavi'ah li v'ocheilah* (v. 4) a dish for me as I like, and bring it to me to eat." Isaac wants this meal to precede the blessing he will give to his firstborn son. Rebekah overhears her husband talking to Esau, and once Esau leaves, she conspires with her favored son to manipulate her blind husband and trick him into giving Jacob the blessing. Rebekah tells Jacob to go and bring two choice goats from the flock, and she herself will make the *mat'amim* for Isaac, that "*vheivei'ta l'avicha v'achal*, he should take it to his father to eat, in order that he may bless you before he dies" (v. 9-10). Rebekah puts the skins of the goats on Jacob to disguise his smooth skin as his brother's hairy mantle. Rebekah "*vatitein 'et-hamat'amim v'et halechem 'asher 'asatah*—puts in

the hands of her son Jacob the dish and the bread she had prepared," (v.17) and Jacob lies to his father, saying he is really Esau. In v. 25, Isaac says to his son, ""*hagishah li v'ochlah mitzeid b'ni….vayagesh-lo vayo'chal vayavei' lo yayin vayeisht*--Serve me and let me eat of my son's game that I may give you my innermost blessing.' So he served him and he ate, and he brought him wine and he drank." Isaac gives Jacob his blessing, and even the first line of the blessing in v.28 uses food imagery (*shmanei ha'aretz vrov dagan v'tirosh*—the fat of the earth and an abundance of new grain and wine).

Here, Jacob and Esau are once again involved in a narrative where food is the material by which a deception transpires. This time, it is Jacob and his mother, Rebekah, working in cahoots to trick blind Isaac such that he gives the blessing of the firstborn to his second born son. Whether or not Isaac knew what was happening around him, it is the preparing of food and its eating and drinking that provides the setting for another deception.

A3. Genesis 42-44 (Joseph)

Throughout the Joseph saga, there are several passages wherein eating and drinking play a role in deception. In Genesis 42:1-8, there is a famine in the land, and Jacob's sons go into Egypt to find food rations. Ten of Joseph's brothers go to find grain to eat, and Joseph encounters his brothers. He recognizes them, but does not reveal himself as their brother. Here, it is the famine and the search for food that brings together estranged brothers, though only Joseph knows their interaction is in fact a reunion.

In 42:18-26, Joseph comes to see his brothers where they are being held. He tells his brothers they must leave one of their own in jail as collateral, while the rest will be given *shever ra'avon bateichem*, grain to give to their starving households. This is

Joseph's way of testing the brothers' integrity. Reuben speaks up to his brothers, reminding them that he was the one who spoke up not to hurt Joseph. Joseph appears to have spoken to his brothers via a *meilitz* (interpreter), even though he understood their Hebrew, and was moved to tears. The brothers do not realize that Joseph understands their language, because of the presence of the interpreter. Joseph then gives orders to fill the bags with grain and money, *v'lateit lahem tzadah ladarech*, and gives them provisions for their journey (v. 25). Joseph continues his deception of his brothers, not revealing his relation to them.

In 43:1-5, the biblical narrator notes that the famine in the land was severe. The brothers and their family have eaten all of the rations they had procured from Joseph in Egypt, and they have to return to procure more food. The brothers and their father express concern about losing another of their ranks, and Israel tells them to pack gifts for the man in Egypt, including foodstuffs (v. 11). In 43:16, Joseph sees his brothers and he commands one of his servants *ut'voach tevach v'hachein ki 'iti yo'chlu ha'anashim batzohorayim*—slaughter and prepare an animal, for the men will dine with me at noon." The men are anxious, fearing that they are being welcomed into Joseph's house to be seized as slaves (the same fate that once awaited Joseph himself). From 43:20-22, the brothers try to explain themselves to Joseph's steward that the reason they are there at all is to procure food.

In 43:24, there is a glimpse of hospitality; Joseph's steward brings the men water to wash their feet, and food for their animals. Because the men hear *ki-sham yo'chlu lachem*, that there they will be eating bread, they lay out the gifts they brought for the Egyptian man. Joseph continues to maintain the façade that he is a stranger to the men,

asking questions about his relatives' well being without revealing himself as their brother. Joseph is moved to tears once more, and then returns to the brothers. He commands his servants *simu lachem*, serve the bread/meal, and then the biblical narrator indicates that the Israelites and the Egyptians are properly segregated by nation and status for their meal. *Vayishtu vayishk'ru 'imo*, they drink and get drunk with him (v.34), and Joseph instructs his steward to fill the men's bags with food rations for them to carry home. Joseph has them put the silver goblet in the youngest brother's bag, to manipulate a situation and create a context for treachery.

Joseph presents himself as a diviner, getting upset at his brothers for stealing his sacred goblet. It provides him one more chance to interact with the brothers. Finally, after they recount their story to him, Joseph goes to his brothers, and reveals himself as Joseph. Throughout his saga, many opportunities arise for food and famine to serve as plot tools of deception. Joseph is able to maintain his cover as a man of status in Egypt, even while his starving brothers come to get rations from his domain.

A4. I Samuel 20 (David and Jonathan)

In this passage, the weaker (David) is the deceiver, and he is rewarded. David acts to serve the will of God, so despite his deceptive acts, he is rewarded. At this point in his story, David is not yet the powerful king he is to become. David flees from Ramah, and he asks Jonathan why his father seeks to kill David. David decides to hide in the countryside, avoiding a dinner where he was supposed to sit with King Saul to eat *v'anochi yoshov-'eisheiv 'im-hamelech le'echol*. Jonathan helps his dear friend, even against his own father. They orchestrate a way to communicate covertly, and at the feast of the new moon, David goes forth with his plan to hide. Saul does not make mention of

David's absence on the first day of the feast, but on the second day he asks his son where David is. Jonathan makes up an alibi for David that he had to go to a *zevach mishpachah*, a family feast, instead of the king's feast of the new moon. Saul sees through David's story, knowing he is being deceived. Saul declares that David is marked for death. Jonathan leaves the feast, *v'lo'-'achal b'yom-hachodesh hasheini lechem*, and he does not eat any food on the second day of the new moon, *ki ne'tzav 'el David*, because he is grieved about David. The section ends with David and Jonathan restating their covenant of allegiance to each other. David and Jonathan conspire against King Saul, and they do so with the feast of the new moon and a family feast as settings for their deception.

A5. 1 Sam 21:2-10 (David)

Immediately following this scene, David visits the priest, Ahimelech. David is alone, and the priest recognizes this as an unusual occurrence. David lies about why he is alone, saying the king ordered him on a secret mission. David requests bread from the priest, asking "*mah-yeish tachat-yad'cha, chamishah-lechem? tn'ah v'yadi 'o hanimtza'*—what do you have on hand? Any loaves of bread? Let me have them, or whatever you have available" (v. 21:4). The priest gives him *lechem qodesh*, consecrated bread, once David assures the priest that he and the men with whom he was traveling are all properly consecrated. He takes the consecrated bread and Goliath's sword (vss. 10-11) from the priest, and continues to flee from the king. In this passage, David is procuring inappropriate food for himself[52] as he flees from King Saul. The priest Ahimelech assists him, not knowing he is being deceived.

A6. 2 Samuel 12 (David and Nathan)

[52] If he's lying about his state of cultic purity, he is not a candidate for this consecrated food.

This passage follows the story of David impregnating Bathsheba and trying to have her husband, Uriah, killed.[53] After Uriah dies and Bathsheba has mourned, David takes her as his wife. This goes against the will of God, and so God sends his prophet, Nathan, to David. Nathan shares a parable with David: there were two men in a city, one rich and one poor. The poor man only had one small lamb, but the rich man had large flocks. *Mipito to'chal umikoso tishteh uv'cheiqo tishkav, vathi-lo k'bat*—the poor man tended to the ewe and took care of; it used to share his morsel of bread, drink from his cup, and nestle in his bosom; it was like a daughter to him. In the parable, the rich man had a visitor; wanting to prepare a meal of welcome for the visitor but not wanting to slaughter one of his own animals, he slaughtered the poor man's ewe and prepared it for his visitor.

David is furious about this story, declaring that the rich man deserves to die. Nathan reveals to David that in fact the parable is meant to symbolize David's own actions. David had Uriah killed just to get to his wife, despite all of the other things the Lord had provided for David and his house. Therefore, Nathan tells David, the sword will never depart from David's house. In this passage, a hospitality scene is employed in a parable to reveal David's deceptive acts.

A. Conclusion: Deception

These six passages serve as examples of eating and drinking playing a role in scenes where characters are acting deceitfully. In the first passage, Jacob deceives Esau, manipulating his brother to give over the rights to the birthright blessing in exchange for a portion of lentil stew. Jacob knowingly stews the lentils, anticipating his brother will

[53] See Hospitality C4.

return hungry from a failed hunting trip.[54] The food becomes the commodity by which a deceitful act can transpire[55].

In the second passage, Jacob and Esau once again meet over a meal of deception. This time, the saga includes their parents. Rebekah helps her favored son, Jacob, to manipulate her blind husband, Isaac, creating a situation wherein Jacob can get the blessing due his brother Esau. Food again becomes a commodity for deception, as old Isaac is tricked by his wife and Jacob into giving the blessing to the second born son.

In the third passage, there are many situations involving Joseph and his brothers where food plays a role. There is a bad famine in the land, which is a neutral plot impetus to push Joseph's brothers into his domain to find food. Then, food rations are used as a test of the brothers' integrity. Next, gifts of food are brought to Joseph at a shared meal between him and his brothers. Finally, Joseph uses a silver goblet, which he claims he uses for divining, as yet another test of his brothers. All the while, Joseph deceives his brothers, concealing his identity.

In the fourth passage, David deceives King Saul with the help of Jonathan, his beloved accomplice. Together, they attempt to protect David from Saul's vengeful wrath. David avoids Saul's feast, and hides instead. Jonathan is so distraught about his father's desire to kill David that he himself abstains from eating at the feasts. The feast provides a context for the deception to transpire.

---

[54] Esau is characterized as a skillful hunter (*'ish yodea' tzayid*, Gen. 25:27), yet he appears to come home from a hunting excursion with nothing to show for it.

[55] An alternative reading: The narrator presents Esau as having impulsively sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, so while he may not have been actively deceived, there is a tricky coercion at play here. Later, in Genesis 27:36, Esau asserts that he has been twice deceived by his brother.

In the fifth passage, David lies to the priest, Ahimelech, in order to find provisions to survive while he flees from King Saul. David lies to the priest, claiming a certain level of consecration and cleanliness in order to receive bread for himself and his men. David takes advantage of the priest in his quest to flee from King Saul.

In the sixth passage, Nathan uses a parable to teach David about the fault of his actions. Nathan enables David to see how he has been deceiving people, using his wealth and power to get what he wants, taking for granted the effect of his actions on other people. As a result of David's actions, his house will be subject to violence and desolation.

In each of these six sections, food is used in scenes where characters deceive others. Sometimes the deception has to do with how food is procured, and other times, feasts and famines provide plot impetuses for exchanges between characters.

B. Betrayal/Treachery

This section will analyze four passages wherein characters use contexts of eating to betray other characters, or wherein the act of eating or drinking provides the setting for a treacherous plot to be enacted.

B1. Genesis 37:12-25 (Joseph)

In this passage, Joseph has already offended his brothers by sharing his dreams with them, wherein he has an inappropriate amount of power given his birth order. Israel sends Joseph out to his brothers, to see how the flocks are faring. A man comes upon him, and asks him what he is looking for. Joseph says is looking for his brothers, and the man leads him to Dothan, where his brothers were with their flocks. The brothers see Joseph approaching, and they conspire to kill him. They suggest killing him and throwing him

into a pit, so they can say, "*chayah ra'ah 'achalat'hu*—a savage beast devoured him" (v. 20). Joseph's brother, Reuben, stands up for Joseph, looking for a non-violent way to take care of their anger towards Joseph. The brothers take no heed; they strip Joseph of his tunic and cast him into a pit. The biblical narrator provides an extra detail: "*habor reiq; 'ain bo' mayim*—the pit was empty; there was no water in it" (v. 24). As soon as Joseph is cast into this empty pit, the brothers "*vayeishvu le'echol-lechem*—they sat down to eat bread/a meal" (v. 25). These brothers, who have just conspired to kill Joseph, immediately sit down and break bread together.

This meal signifies two different things: first, it signals their collective betrayal of their brother, Joseph. Even Reuben, who in verse 22 tries to persuade his brothers to take a different approach to their murderous rage, falls into the mob mentality and sits with the brothers around the pit to eat. The second thing this meal signifies is a kind of covenant between the brothers. By sitting and eating together, they are solidifying their bond as an allied force against their brother, Joseph. This interpersonal covenant, while it does not have the symbolic action of an oral agreement (as presented by the biblical narrator), does unite the brothers as a group because of the symbolic meal they share. They have just cast their brother into a desolate pit, and rather than regret their actions, they turn to food. This is an extreme symbol of betrayal. If, indeed, "the worst kind of traitor is the traitor with whom one has shared food,"[56] then these brothers have marked themselves as the ultimate traitors to their brother, for they sit together and eat while he seems to meet his demise[57].

B2. Judges 4:18-21 (Yael)

[56] Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*, 86.
[57] For more on interpersonal covenants, see Covenant: A.

In this passage, Deborah pursues Sisera along with Barak. Sisera hears about the pursuit, and he orders all of his chariots and men to move. When Barak charges, Sisera flees on foot while all of his men fall by the sword. Sisera, while fleeing, comes upon Yael's tent. V*ateitz*ei *Yael,* Yael comes out to greet him, and welcomes him into the tent. She offers him comfort and a blanket. Though he asks for a small bit of water, saying, "*hashqini-na' m'et-mayim, ki tzameiti,*" she opens a skin of milk brings that to him instead of water. She covers him back up with the blanket, and then he assigns her guard duty at the opening of the tent. Opportunistic Yael grabs a mallet and a tent pin, and drives the pin into his temple when he was asleep.

Here, Yael's hospitality begins in a straightforward manner; she welcomes her guest into her home, and offers to him more than what he requested. This leads to her taking the opportunity to kill him while he sleeps; after all, the prophecy stated that Sisera would be delivered into the hands of a woman (and not into Deborah's hands, specifically). It is Yael's hospitality and offering of milk that leads to her ability to kill Sisera. Yael's hospitality is a betrayal of his trust, which provides the setting for Yael to eliminate Sisera.

B3. Judges 9:26ff (Gaal ben Ebed and Abimelech)

In this passage, a story of betrayal begins with Gaal ben Ebed's coming through Shechem with his companions and razing vineyards. In v. 27, it is written, "*vayeitz'u hasadeh vayiv'tz'ru 'et-karmeihem vayid'r'chu vaya'asu hilulim, vayavo'u beit 'eloheihem, vayo'chlu vayishu vay'qal'lu 'et-'avimelech*--They went out into the fields, gathered and trod out the vintage of their vineyards, and held a festival. They entered the temple of their god, and as they ate and drank they reviled Abimelech." Gaal ben Ebed

has a rebellious outburst, and Zebul, the governor of the city, hears about what Gaal is saying about overthrowing Abimelech. Zebul sets up forces to protect the king against Gaal, and he turns Gaal's words against him (v. 28). Eventually, after much battle, many men of Shechem are killed. In v. 53, a woman drops a millstone on Abimelech's head, and he begs his attendant to stab him, such that nobody could claim that a woman had killed him. The biblical narrator finishes the pericope with a note that Abimelech was killed because God repaid Abimelech for the evil he had done to his father. Here, it is the feast scene at the beginning of the story that provides the setting for Gaal ben Ebed's eventual demise, and also the demise of Abimelech.

B4. Judges 14 (Samson's Riddle)

In this passage, Samson desires a Philistine woman from Timnah to take as his wife. When he and his parents go into the vineyards of Timnah, a lion comes to attack Samson, and the spirit of God allows Samson to tear the lion to pieces. He goes down to meet the woman, and the biblical narrator indicates that a year passed before Samson went to marry her. He sees the remains of the lion he destroyed, and in the lion he finds a swarm of bees, *ud'vash*, and honey, in the lion's skeleton. He scoops up the honey. *Vayeilech haloch v'achol, vayeilech 'el-'aviv v'el-'imo vayitein lahem vayo'cheilu, v'lo'-higid lahem ki mig'viyat ha'aryei radah had'vash*—Samson eats the honey as he goes along, and he joins his father and mother, giving them some honey, and they eat it. He does not tell them that he has scooped the honey out of a lion's skeleton. Samson's father comes down to meet his son's bride, *vaya'as sham shimshon mishteh ki kein ya'asu habachurim*—Samson gives a feast there, as young men used to do. This bridal feast was to last seven days, and there were thirty Philistine companions designated to share the

feast there. Samson challenges them to solve a riddle, which these companions are supposed to answer over the course of the feast in exchange for tunics and clothing. Samson says to them, "*meiha'ocheil yatza' ma'achal, umei'az yatza' matoq*—out of the eater came something to eat, out of the strong came something sweet" (v.14). The companions cannot answer the riddle, and they complain to Samson's wife, threatening to set her and her father's household on fire. Samson's wife comes to Samson, claiming that he hates her instead of loving her, because he has asked her countrymen a riddle without telling her the answer. His response is that he did not even tell his parents, let alone her, the answer. She continues to nag him throughout the feast, and finally he tells her the answer. She explains the riddle to her countrymen. So, on the seventh day of the bridal feast, the townspeople say, "*mah-matoq midvash, umeh 'az me'ari*—what is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?" Samson responds to them, "*lulei' charashtem b'eglati, lo' m'tza'tem chidati*—had you not plowed with my heifer, you would not have found the answer to my riddle!" (v. 18). The spirit of God comes over him, and Samson kills thirty Ashkelonites in a fit of rage. He takes their clothes, and gives the clothing of the dead men to the companions from the feast. Samson's wife then marries one of the men who had been at the bridal feast.

The Philistine woman from Timnah whom Samson wanted to marry was a treacherous woman, who utilized Samson's riddle as an opportunity to betray him and maintain her alliance with her countrymen. Her countrymen made her an offer she could not refuse. Additionally, Samson uses a food-related riddle from his conquering of the lion and the honey he found therein. It was an unfair riddle, since only Samson could have known the answer; it came from his individual experience of finding the lion's

carcass and the honey inside. His ability to conquer the lion, and the sweet honey that came forth from his strength, provided material for his riddle.

B. Conclusion: Betrayal/Treachery

Each of these four passages serves as an example of betrayal and treachery in contexts where eating and drinking are parts of the narrative plot. In the first passage, Joseph's brothers conspire to kill him and once they throw him into a stark empty pit, they sit together to share bread. This symbolic action serves as their uniting to betray their brother. Though they did not in fact kill their brother, as they had sought to do, their eating near the pit indicates they felt neither remorse nor regret for trying to eliminate their brother.

In the second passage, Yael offers hospitality to Sisera, who is fleeing from Barak and Deborah as they pursue him. He asks his hostess, Yael, for some water and she brings him milk instead. She places a blanket on top of him, offering comfort and a feeling of safety. Sisera falls asleep, exhausted from battle, and Yael kills him violently while he is asleep in her tent. Yael manipulates the conventions of hospitality to betray Sisera's trust, thus providing her with the opportunity to kill him.

In the third passage, Gaal ben Ebed voices his rebellious spirit in the context of a festival. He and his companions raze vineyards and create a festival for themselves, eating and drinking in the temple of their god, reviling Abimelech all the while. This festival provides a setting for Gaal to betray Abimelech, to eat and drink while worshipping a false god, and this narrative passage ends with the demise of both Gaal ben Ebed and Abimelech.

In the fourth passage, Samson is betrayed by his Philistine bride-to-be at Timnah. When he offers a riddle during his bridal feast, Samson does not expect to be betrayed by his wife. However, she aligns herself with her countrymen, manipulating Samson and revealing his riddle's answer. Samson kills thirty men in an angry rage. He fulfills his side of the riddle's bargain by giving the dead men's thirty sets of clothes to the Philistine companions from his bridal feast.

Each of these four scenes presents characters acting in betrayal or treacherously, and doing so in food-related contexts. Feasts, festivals, and hospitality scenes alike provide the setting for characters to betray their family members and covenantal relationships.

C. God's Will and Prophetic Pronouncements

This section will present and analyze several scenes wherein God's will or prophetic pronouncements involve scenes of perfidy and eating or drinking.

C1. 1 Kings 16:1-14 (Zimri)

In this passage, the word of God comes to Jehu against Baasha. God tells Jehu that anyone from the house of Baasha will be killed, because they followed in the way of Jeroboam and caused Israel to sin. In verse 4, God tells Jehu, "*Hameit lva'sha' ba'ir yo'chlu hak'lavim, vhameit lo basadeh yo'chlu 'of hashamaim*—anyone belonging to Baasha who dies in the town shall be devoured by dogs, and anyone belonging to him who dies in the field shall be devoured by the birds of the sky." God does strike down Baasha and his house, and Baasha's son, Elah, succeeds him as king. Zimri, Elah's officer, finds Elah while he is *v'tirtzah shoteh shikor*—drinking himself drunk at Tirzah. Zimri enters and kills him, succeeding him as king and once and for all destroying the

house of Baasha in accordance with the word of God as spoken through Jehu. In this scene, Elah's drinking himself drunk provides Zimri with a chance to fulfill Jehu's prophetic declaration of God's intention to eliminate the house of Baasha[58].

C2. 2 Kings 9:1-10 (Jehu)

In this passage, Elisha summons his disciple, and sends him to anoint Jehu as the king of Israel. The disciple does so, and adds a message from God; Jehu is to strike down the house of Ahab, thus avenging on Jezebel the blood of God's prophets and servants. God will make the house of Ahab like those of Jeroboam and Baasha before him. In verse 10, it is written, "*v'et-'izevel yo'chlu haklavim b'cheileq yizr'e'l, v'ain qoveir*—the dogs shall devour Jezebel in the field of Jezreel, with none to bury her." Once more, God's pronouncement through this prophet is that someone (this time, Jezebel) will be devoured by dogs in a canine banquet because of her sinful behavior.

C3. 2 Kings 9:30ff (Jezebel)

In this passage, Jezebel is approaching her demise. Jehu approaches Jezreel, and Jezebel gets herself dressed up and ready for his approach. Jehu approaches, and he needs to know who his allies are. Several eunuchs volunteer themselves to sacrifice Jezebel, and Jehu has them throw down Jezebel from the window. Per Deborah Appler's analysis, "Jezebel is a perverted sacrifice, offered by eunuchs who are least appropriate and eaten by dogs instead of the priests. Jezebel becomes food for the dogs and is scattered over the valley of Jezreel just as it had been prophesied."[59] Jezebel is tossed to the horses below, where she is trampled.

---

[58] And the dogs and birds get to eat, too.
[59] Deborah Appler, "From Queen to Cuisine: Food Imagery in the Jezebel Narrative," *Semeia* no.86 (1999): 65.

Once Jezebel has met her bloody end, Jehu goes inside to eat and drink, as it is written in verse 34, *"vayavo' vayo'chal vayeisht*—he went inside and ate and drank." When the attendants are supposed to go out and bury Jezebel, they find only her skull, feet, and hands. They tell Jehu that God's prophecy had been fulfilled, "*b'cheileq yizr'e'l yo'chlu haklavim 'et-besar 'izavel*—the dogs shall devour the flesh of Jezebel in the field of Jezreel." Here, Jehu marks an important transition by eating and drinking. He is not making a covenant, but he is marking the difference between a world with and without Jezebel.

This passage is but a small segment of the larger narrative surrounding Jezebel. In her article, "From Queen to Cuisine: Food Imagery in the Jezebel Narrative," Deborah Appler reads the wider Jezebel narrative as a story where the literary form itself mirrors a meal. Her analysis is helpful in understanding how this piece of Jezebel's story fits into the broader narrative, and why the food-specific passages are so important. Appler writes, "much of this narrative is set during a time of famine, a period of chaos and decay. The boundaries that maintain social order—boundaries separating foreigner and Israelite, male and female, human and animal, consumer and consumed, and the sacred and profane—have become distorted."[60] The whole saga takes place within a food-related context: famine. Appler continues in the food paradigm, writing, "This unpalatable stew, Jezebel, must be consumed, digested, and excreted for the system to regain its health.[61]" Jezebel herself becomes the food that needs to be fully processed for the wider system to

[60] Ibid. 55
[61] Ibid. 55

resume proper function. By Appler's count, the term *achal*, or eat, is found some 44 times throughout the Jezebel narrative[62].

Jezebel manipulates typical conventions of power in biblical literature; in 1 Kings 21:7-8, she tells her husband, King Ahab, to show himself as king over Israel. She says to him, "*qum 'echol-lechem vitav libecha*—rise up, eat something, and be cheer up!" before writing letters in his name to take care of business herself. In that story, she proclaims a fast on behalf of Ahab. In so doing, she flips their power dynamic, effectively becoming King Jezebel. In that same portion of the narrative, Elijah comes to Ahab to tell him that, like Naboth before him, dogs will lap up his own blood (*yaloqu haklavim 'et-damcha*, vs. 19). Jezebel, though, meets a slightly different fate. By reading the story of Jezebel in the context of the wider corpus of Ancient Near Eastern literature, the use of eating imagery becomes more strongly significant. Jezebel is eaten and digested not just by any creatures, but by creatures held in high esteem in Canaanite religion. Her perverted sacrifice is the biblical author's way of degrading the Baal worshippers. This passage, then, has strong theological import.

C. Conclusion: God's Will and Prophetic Pronouncements

This section seeks to analyze various scenes wherein eating and drinking are used in conjunction with realizing God's will or the pronouncements of prophets. In the first passage, Zimri fulfills the pronouncement of God to Jehu, that the house of Baasha would be eliminated. By killing Baasha's son and successor, Elah, while Elah was drinking himself drunk, Zimri realizes God's will. The prophecy included the fact that the house of Baasha would be eaten by dogs and birds.

[62] Ibid. 56

In the second passage, Jehu is told to strike down the house of Ahab, and that Jezebel will be devoured by dogs in the field of Jezreel. That dogs eat Jezebel puts her in line with the destroyed house of Baasha, because of the parallels in the prophetic proclamations about both of them wherein they are each consumed by dogs after their demise.

In the third passage, Jezebel is trampled by horses and eaten by dogs. After Jezebel falls to her death, Jehu eats. Jehu's eating and drinking after Jezebel is killed is similar to the meal that Joseph's brothers share around the pit in that the meal is transitional. While Jehu is not making an interpersonal covenant, he is marking the change between a world with Jezebel and the resolution of her demise.

Each of these passages, especially the wider Jezebel saga, present narrative situations wherein eating and drinking can either lead to or provide context for a character's demise in fulfillment of God's will or a prophetic pronouncement.

D. Coercion

This section will seek to analyze how different biblical passages incorporate eating and drinking into situations where characters are being coerced in some way.

D1. Gen 25:27-34 (Esau) [See also Perfidy:A1]

In this passage, Jacob cooks up a stew of deception to receive his brother's birthright blessing. Biblical law is clear that the father must give his first born son the property due the primogeniture regardless of his desire to do so (cf. Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Even so, Genesis 25 shows Jacob taking action and creating a context wherein a kind of manipulative transaction can take place.

In his article, "Why did Esau Spurn the Birthright?: A Study in Biblical Interpretation," Reuben Ahroni analyzes the narrative in Genesis 25:29-34 in comparison to other biblical literature that describes sons inheriting out of order. "The transfer of the birthright from Jacob to Esau," writes Ahroni, "is conducted like an ordinary commercial transaction. Esau literally barters away his birthright[63]. Moreover, this transaction is assumed to be valid even without the father's sanction or knowledge."[64] Why would Esau spurn his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew? Did he see no need in inheritance? Was he so poor a hunter that he came back with no prey to eat?

Jacob, perhaps knowingly, cooks up a stew (*vayazed Ya'aqov nazid)* with which he can accomplish his goals of having his brother spurn the birthright. Following Ahroni's reading, "one should remember that Jacob does not risk much in this transaction. He acquires the birthright for almost nothing—just a pottage of lentils. Seizing a very propitious opportunity, he extracts it from his famished brother."[65] Jacob is able to coerce his brother, Esau, into giving him the birthright blessing, because he can utilize his stew of deception as a powerful tool.

D2. Samson's wife judges 14:15 [See also Perfidy: B4]

In this passage, Samson wants to take a particular Philistine woman as his wife. He poses a riddle, and the men at his bridal feast are upset that they cannot solve the riddle. By the seventh day of the feast, they have lost patience and come to their countrywoman, Samson's bride, to threaten her, convincing her to get the answer from Samson. They say to her, "*Pati 'et-'isheich 'et-hachidah*—deceive your husband into

[63] There is an Akkadian document from Nuzi in Iraq in which a birthright is sold.
[64] Ahroni, "Why Did Esau Spurn the Birthright: A Study in Biblical Interpretation,"*Judaism* 29 no.3 (1980), 324.
[65] Ibid. 330-331

providing the answer to the riddle" (v.15), *"vateivk 'eishet shimson 'alav*—she harassed him with tears"(v. 16) until he provided the answer "*ki hetziqathu*—because she had oppressed him so" (v. 17). It is because of the wife's ability to coerce Samson that he reveals the answer to his riddle.

D3. Daniel resists coercion 1:5-16 [See also Hospitality:E3]

In the opening of the book of Daniel, Daniel is allotted particular rations from the king. The king Jehoiakim orders his officer to bring handsome, flawless, intelligent youths to learn the writings and language of the Chaldeans. They receive rations *mipat-bag hamelech umiyein mishtav*, from the rations of the king and from the wine he would drink. Daniel is among these youth, and he refuses to eat the king's portions. A guard, whom God disposed to be kind and compassionate toward Daniel, worries that the king will be suspicious if Daniel refuses to eat what is put before him. Daniel requests a trial period, wherein these youth will receive food *min-hazero'im v'no'chlah, umayim v'nishteh*, from seed (legumes) to eat, and water to drink. Daniel wants to prove that this diet would be better than the king's. After ten days, these youth look better than the youth who were eating the king's rations[66].

Here, food is being used as a tool. Despite his circumstance, Daniel resists partaking of the food that could defile him. Whereas an ordinary person might eat what he was provided, Daniel resists the temptation. This is not an example of direct coercion, but it demonstrates how a biblical figure is able to resist the foodstuff provided him in spite of serious power imbalance.

D. Conclusion: Coercion

[66] This is meant to show Jewish boys the benefits of what later would be called kashruth. Only Daniel and his companions refrain from unclean food. The other Jewish boys don't.

Each of these passages shows biblical figures in contexts where coercion and food are somehow connected. In the first passage, Esau is coerced into spurning his birthright. Jacob cooks up a stew, and in doing so is able to trade his foodstuff for the blessing he covets. Though the narrative presents this as a commercial transaction, with two parties bartering, Jacob effectively coerces Esau into giving up the blessing in his desperate hunger for a simple pottage of lentils.

In the second passage, Samson's Philistine wife coerces him into giving up the answer to his riddle over the course of their bridal feast. She manipulates his trust. Though he had not even told his own family members the answer to the riddle, her constant nagging and crying are enough to break even Samson.

In the third passage, Daniel is able to resist a potentially coercive situation; that is to say, Daniel is effectively under the command of the king, but he manages his circumstances such that he is able to maintain a vegetarian diet instead of consuming the royal rations.

Each of these passages serves as an example of how food and coercion can be utilized together in biblical narrative. A feast can be the setting for coercion. Biblical figures can use food as power, thus accomplishing their goals to manipulate. Finally, extraordinary characters can maintain the integrity of their diets by resisting coercion, even when answering to the king.

E. Misfortune & Famine

In this section, biblical passages involving food and misfortunate will be analyzed. In biblical literature, famines fall into two main categories: theologically neutral or divine punishment. The first subsection will deal with famine as theologically neutral plot

impetuses. The second subsection will deal with famine as divine punishment. In both subsections, the setting of the famine will be significant to each narrative. These excerpts serve as examples of narratives with famine, and not as an exhaustive analysis of how famine functions in biblical narratives.

EA. Famine as Theologically Neutral Plot Impetus

EA1. Ruth 1

The book of Ruth begins with *ra'av ba'aretz*, a famine in the land. This famine serves as a theologically neutral plot impetus. The famine's purpose is not to punish a ruler who had led Israel to sin, but instead provides a context for which the Judite family from Bethlehem came to be in the land of Moab. Naomi and her daughters-in-law set out towards Judah after each of their husbands died, because Naomi had heard that there *"ki-faqad YHVH 'et-'amo lateit lahem lachem*—God had taken note of his people and given them food" (v. 6). Food and famine are the driving forces in the beginning of this narrative; they lead to family migration. Ruth and Naomi end up arriving in Bethlehem (itself a pun—*beit lechem* = house of bread!) at the time of the barley harvest (v. 22). Throughout the book of Ruth, famine, food, and harvesting are important plot devices.

EA2. Genesis 41:57-43 [See also Perfidy:A3]

These chapters relate the Joseph saga. The biblical narrator sets the scene in 41:57, where it is written, "*v'chol-ha'aretz ba'u mitzraymah lishbor 'el-Yoseif, ki-chazaq hara'av b'chol-ha'aretz*—So all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to procure rations, for the famine had become severe throughout the world." That famine is the impetus to bring Joseph's brothers to Egypt; they come down to Egypt, interact unknowingly with their lost brother, and try to procure rations for their family.

EA3. Sister/Wife Narratives in Genesis 12, 20, and 26

These three passages, Genesis 12, Genesis 20, and Genesis 26, contain narratives of patriarchs trying to pass their wives as their sisters to different royal rulers. In all three stories, there are certain narrative themes or literary stations that are shared: context for displacement; anticipation of danger; matriarch transference; wealth acquisition; divine intervention; local king's actions; morality play; absolving patriarch; and resolution [see Appendix A]. In both Genesis 12 and Genesis 26, the context for the displacement theme is famine.

In his article, "Disgrace: The Lies of the Patriarch,"[67] Yair Zakovitch analyzes Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the sins they commit as Israel's national archetypes. There, Zakovitch writes about the ways the sins of the patriarchs are punished, and the retribution exacted upon each man throughout his life. Though both Abraham and Isaac each present their wives as their sisters to foreign kings, for neither patriarch does the famine in the narrative serve as divine punishment. Instead, these famines serve as theologically neutral plot impetuses that provide the contexts for the patriarchs to come into contact with their foreign kings.

EB. Famine as Divine Punishment

EB1. 2 Samuel 21

In this passage, there is a famine (*ra'av*) during the reign of David. Chapter 21 begins, "There was a famine during the reign of David, year after year for three years. David inquired of the Lord, and the Lord replied, 'It is because of the bloodguilt of Saul and [his] house, for he put some Gibeonites to death.'" Thus, David experiences this

[67] Zakovitch, "Disgrace: The Lies of the Patriarch," *Social Research* 75 no. 4 (2008).

famine explicitly as a divine punishment. David makes expiation by delivering seven sons of Saul to the Gibeonites (v. 5-6).

This is not the only time David encounters famine as a divine punishment. In 2 Samuel 24:13 (and paralleled in 1 Chronicles 21:10-12), the prophet Gad presents David with three possible punishments for ordering a census: "Gad came to David and told him; he asked, 'Shall a seven-year famine (*sheva' shanim ra'av b'artzecha*) come upon you in the land, or shall you be in flight from your adversaries for three months while they pursue you, or shall there be three days of pestilence in your land? Now consider carefully what reply I shall take back to Him who sent me.'" Famine, pursuit by enemies, and pestilence are three possible divine punishments for David. These are two situations wherein famine is specifically and clearly offered as a divine punishment.

EB2. I Kings 17:1 with 18:17-18

In this passage, Elijah proclaims to Ahab that, "*chai-YHVH 'Elohei Yisra'eil 'asher 'amadti lfanav 'em-yihyeh hashanim ha'eleh tal umatar, ki 'im-lfi d'vari*—as the Lord lives, the God of Israel whom I stand before, there will be no dew or rain except at my bidding." Rain is then withheld, and Elijah is dispatched to Wadi Cherith; v. 7 clarifies, "*vayhi miqeitz yamim vayivash hanachal ki lo'-hayah geshem ba'aretz*—after some time the wadi dried up because there was no rain in the land."

This drought is divine punishment for the sins of the Northern Kingdom. Elijah is outnumbered by the prophets of Baal, 450 to 1 (18:22), so he proposes a challenge to Baal's prophets. They bring a meal offering to Baal, and it is ineffective. Then, Elijah makes an offering to God, *vato'chal 'et-ha'olah,* and a fire of God consumes the offering. Proven correct, Elijah has the prophets of Baal slaughtered in the wadi. He then goes to

Ahab, and tells him, "*'aleih 'echol ushteih, ki-qol hamon hagashem*—go up, eat and drink, for there is a rumbling of [approaching] rain" (v.41). The slaughtering of the 450 prophets of Baal lifts the drought and alleviates the famine. It is also a saga ended with King Ahab eating and drinking; this denotes a transition between periods.

EB3. Ezek 4:9-17 [See also Covenant:E2]

In this passage, God speaks to Ezekiel about the siege of Jerusalem. Ezekiel is to gather grains and bake them into a barley cake prepared on human excrement. Ezekiel negotiates with God, pleading for something instead of the ultimately impure human excrement. God allows the baking to be done on cow's dung instead, and God says to the prophet, "**'**O mortal, I am going to break the staff of bread (*mateih-lechem*) in Jerusalem, and they shall eat bread by weight in anxiety (*v'ochlu-lechem bmishqal uvid'a'gah*), and drink water by measure, in horror, (*umayim bmisurah uvshimamon yishtu*) so that, lacking bread and water (*ich's'ru lechem vamayim*), they shall stare at each other, heartsick over their iniquity'"(4:16-17). The use of excrement as baking material is a powerful symbol, evoking panic and sadness in Ezekiel, who holds food purity in high regard. God explicitly utilizes the withholding of appropriate food and water as a punishment for the iniquities of the people.

E. Conclusion: Misfortune & Famine

In this section, several scenes featuring misfortune and famine were analyzed. The scenes fall into two main categories: scenes where famine is a theologically neutral plot impetus, and scenes where famine is divine punishment. In the first set, famine serves as an element of a narrative's context and setting. It provides a backdrop for events to transpire, but it is not something divinely sent. In the second set, each scene features

famine as an explicit form of divine punishment. Someone sins, there is a famine in the land, and retribution must be made before the famine is lifted.

Conclusion: Perfidy

Eating and drinking appear in many contexts throughout biblical literature. One setting of particular interest is within narratives dealing with perfidy of some kind. In cases of deception, food can become a commodity of manipulation, allowing biblical figures to achieve their exploitative means, like Jacob in Genesis 25. Situations of eating and drinking also provide contexts for characters to be deceptive in concealing their own identities from those with whom they share a meal, as in the case of Jacob and Isaac in Genesis 27.

Eating and drinking can also be salient symbols in stories about betrayal or treachery. Sharing a meal together symbolizes allegiance and unity, so betraying someone in that context is particularly horrible. Sometimes, this betrayal comes within the context of a kind of covenant, as in the case with Joseph's brothers and the meal they share beside the pit into which they have thrown him in Genesis 37. Sometimes, the betrayal comes about in the context of inappropriate eating or drinking, as in the case of Gaal ben Ebed in Judges 9.

God's will can be fulfilled with the use of food or drink. Prophetic pronouncements about royal demise can be fulfilled when characters drink too much, like Elah in 1 Kings 16, or when characters themselves must be ingested and processed, as with Jezebel in 2 Kings 9.

Eating can also play a role in coercion. For example, at their bridal feast, Samson's wife coerces him into revealing the answer to his riddle. Additionally, one

reading of the Jacob and Esau narrative in Genesis 25 shows Jacob coercing his starving brother Esau into giving up the birthright for a meager pottage of lentils.

Finally, famine and misfortune can play important roles in either the plot of a narrative or in the divine punishment of specific figures. When famine is theologically neutral, as in Ruth 1, it serves to bring characters together in their common quest for food. When it is divine punishment, like in 2 Samuel 21, the famine serves as a physical punishment for a king and his people as retribution for the sins of the king.

In each category of perfidy, eating and drinking serve as important elements.

Excurses

Excursus 1: Vegetarianism as a Biblical Ideal

Throughout biblical literature, there are many examples of biblical figures eating a wide range of foodstuffs. From divinely provided manna, to ritual offerings, to the *chem'ah v'chalav uven-habaqar*—curds, milk, and calf offered by Abraham in Genesis 18:8, biblical figures eat many different types of food. After Noah and his family survive the flood, animals go from flock to food. This excursus will seek to analyze whether or not the vegetarianism of the antediluvian era was the biblical ideal.

To begin the analysis of vegetarianism as a biblical idea, one must look to the beginning of the story itself. In Genesis 1-2, there are two separate creation narratives. In Genesis 1:29, it is written, "And God said, 'Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed (*kol-'eisev zorei'a zera')* which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit (*f'ri-'eitz zorei'a zara')*—to you it shall be for food (*lachem yihyeh le'ochlah).*'" God provides the first humans with an exclusively plant-based diet. Indeed, even the animals of the land, the birds of the sky, and everything that creeps on the earth eat *'et-kol-yereq 'eisev le'ochlah*—green plants for food. By this account, the primordial animals are herbivores.

Rashi, commenting on Genesis 1:29, teaches that God did not permit Adam and his wife to kill a creature and eat its flesh; only every green herb shall they eat together. God, as creator, did not create some of God's creations to require killing other creatures for food. The biblical writer would have surely known of carnivorous animals; the eagle, vulture, and owl are all mentioned in biblical literature, but they do not seem relevant to the writer of Genesis 1. These carnivorous beasts do not fit into the idealistic view of the

author of Genesis 1, because a harmonious world, freshly created, was one characterized by vegetarianism[68]. In his article, "The Vegetarian Ideal in the Bible," Gary A. Rendsburg compares the two creation stories presented in the early chapters of Genesis.[69] He writes, even "as the two creation stories differ in so many ways, their singular vision is truly extraordinary: the two accounts share only one major theme in common—the vegetarian ideal. In both stories, God creates a world characterized by vegetarianism.[70]" The beginning, then, is full of idealism; peace, harmony, and vegetarianism are important elements of the creation narratives.

However, humans are disappointing. At the first opportunity, the first man and woman disobey the simple rules set before them. Disobedience leads eventually to violence, and chaos reigns on earth. God resets the world with the great flood. Rendsburg writes,

> God realizes that man cannot live up to the ideals established at creation, so a different set of rules is now presented. Among these rules is the permission to eat meat: "Every creature which lives, to you shall be for food, as with the green vegetation, I give to you everything" (*kol-remes 'asher hu'-chai lachem yehyeh l'ochlah, k'yereq 'eisev natati lachem 'et-kol* Gen 9:3). To which is attached one important proviso: "however, flesh with its life-blood in it, you shall not eat" (Gen 9:4). In the Torah's grand narrative, accordingly, the consumption of meat is a compromise, a divine acceptance of human inability to adhere to the utopia established at creation.[71]

Vegetarianism is no more. In the postdiluvian world, people eat animals. Various commentators have tried to explain this change; some present pragmatic explanations for the change in policy (like Saadia Gaon, who suggests that the prohibition against eating meat ended once the earliest generations had multiplied to large enough populations to

---

[68] Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Vegetarian Ideal in the Bible," *Studies in Jewish Civilization* 15 (2005): 321.
[69] Rendsburg, it turns out, is not a disinterested party. He's a vegan but he makes exceptions for good pastry.
[70] Ibid. 320
[71] Ibid. 322

sustain themselves), while others (like Rambam) see the change in diet as a cause of shorter generations in a postdiluvian world. Rabbi Joseph Bechor-Shor understood the change in permitted diet as a reward for saving the animals. Since Noah and his family had rescued the animals in the ark, the animals became humans' commodity, to do with as they pleased.

Genesis 1-2 and Genesis 9 are not the only passages of biblical literature that suggest the biblical ideal of vegetarianism, though. Proverbs 15:17 proclaims, "*tov 'aruchat yaraq v'ahavah-sham mishor 'avus v'sin'ah-vo*—better a meal of vegetables where there is love, than a fattened ox where there is hate." In his article, "Better a Meal of Vegetables with Love": The Symbolic Meaning of Vegetables in Rabbinic and Post-Rabbinic Midrash on Proverbs 15:17," Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus reads the narratives set in the Garden of Eden as the vegetarian ideal, and the shift after Noah to eating animals as part of the Fall[72]. He writes,

> "In the Garden of Eden before the Fall, when there was concord between man and woman, between human beings and God, and between human beings and animals, the diet of all God's creatures was "meals of vegetables." After the Fall, relations broke down between human beings and God, and even between human beings and animals. Permission to indulge in a new meat diet now characterized this discord—friends became food. If it is our human nature to be satisfied with vegetables, it is a nature from which we have fallen.[73]"

Following Brumberg-Kraus' reading, the change in diet shows failure: failure to obey, failure to compromise, failure to meet the expectations of the Creator. A non-vegetarian diet is not the ideal. It is a change in reality that reflects failure.

---

[72] Proverbs 15:17 obviously views a vegetarian meal as less desirable in general. Steak is preferable to kale but if the choice is between good food and good circumstances, the circumstances should be decisive. For a similar sentiment see Prv 15:16; Prv 16:8

[73] Jonathan Brumberg-Kraus, "'Better a Meal of Vegetables with Love': The Symbolic Meaning of Vegetables in Rabbinic and Post-Rabbinic Midrash on Proverbs 15.17,"*Jewish Quarterly Review* 104, no.1 (2014): 47.

Yael Shemesh writes, "the belief in a vegetarian epoch in the youth of the human race, which lasted until after the Flood, is dominant and widespread among the Talmudic sages and medieval commentators. Isaac Arama and Isaac Abravanel even suggest that God planned to provide the Israelites with a strictly vegetarian diet after they left Egypt and accordingly first gave them "bread from the sky" (i.e., manna) and not meat."[74] Even beyond this initial shift from a plant-based diet to the eating of animals (without their life blood), the biblical narratives show people craving meat, not vegetables. While God wants to provide vegetarian foodstuff, manna, to the Israelites in the desert, they complain, craving meat. In a gross display of power, God threatens to provide meat to the nagging Israelites. God tells Moses to have the people purify themselves to eat meat. They will eat the meat not one day, not two, not even five days or ten or twenty, but a whole month, until it comes out of their nostrils and becomes loathsome to them. It is written, "'For you have rejected the Lord who is among you, by whining before Him and saying, 'Oh, why did we ever leave Egypt!'" (Numbers 11:18-20). In this passage[75], the craving for meat is a loathsome thing. God punishes the meat-hungry Israelites, striking them down with a plague before ever the meat could rise to their nostrils. This passage in the wilderness is but one example of discord between God and the Israelites. While God wants the Israelites to survive on the manna, they lust after the meat they enjoyed in Egypt[76].

Vegetables and the plants of the earth hold a particular status in biblical literature. When Ahab desires to acquire Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21, the biblical narrator

---

[74] Yael Shemesh, "Vegetarian Ideology in Talmudic Literature and Traditional Biblical Exegesis," *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism* (2006): 165.
[75] Though not in the parallel story; cf. Exodus 16:8,12.
[76] The main transgression is not the lust for meat, but nostalgia for Egypt.

utilizes food images to exaggerate the royal abuse that occurs. Ahab wants to take the vineyard to plant vegetables, instead of grapes, which allows the narrator to emphasize just how exploitative Ahab is as king[77]. Ahab is so dispirited when Naboth rejects his offer to trade vineyards that he returns home "*vlo'-'achal lachem*—and he would not eat bread" (21:4). Ahab is fasting and pouting, which brings opportunistic Jezebel into a situation wherein she can grasp at his power. Appler writes, "it is the language of food that transfers the blame for the murder of Naboth and confiscation of his vineyard from Ahab to Jezebel…moreover, vegetables within the Hebrew Bible are usually considered insubstantial and of little consequence since they are not considered to be either as filling or prevalent as other foods. This analogy in Proverbs 15:17 proves it.[78]" This passage demonstrates how significant vegetable symbolism can be in narratives. There are nuances that are specific to the culture of the writing; in this case, vegetables seem to have been a less significant category of food, falling inferior to the grapes of the vineyard. The contrast here is between types of vegetation, not plant-based food versus animal-based food.

While vegetation comes to symbolize bounty (see for example Song of Songs 4:13 and 6:11), there are several passages wherein biblical figures find vegetation insufficient for their diet. Those who crave meat, such as Esau and Isaac (Genesis 27:3-4) and the Israelites in the wilderness (Num 11), experience consequences. The beginning of the Hebrew Bible demonstrates a vegetarian ideal, which is relinquished with the degeneration of humanity and the Flood. Rendsburg teaches, "Israel wishes to adhere to that [vegetarian] ideal, even in compromised fashion, and therefore Israel consumes only

[77] Appler, "From Queen to Cuisine," 60.
[78] Ibid. 60-61

those animals that themselves have not killed other animals."[79] The animals permitted to Israelites to slaughter, offer, or eat are animals that are, themselves, herbivores. Even in the dietary laws that come after the Garden of Eden narratives, there are suggestions at a desire to retain an element of the vegetarian ideal[80].

[79] Rendsburg, "The Vegetarian Ideal in the Bible," 327.
[80] An alternative reading would be that, because the generations before the flood were the most morally corrupt, this is less about divine compromise than divine recognition that in contrast to the antediluvian humans who were no better than beasts (Genesis 6:12), post-diluvian humanity is superior to animals and therefore may eat them.

Excursus 2: Food and Sex

In Biblical literature, food serves as a powerful symbol. For example, manna symbolizes God's provision for the Israelites, sharing bread together symbolizes the creation of a covenant, and hospitality symbolizes a welcoming of the divine presence into one's home. This excursus will analyze another biblical symbolic use of food: food and sex. The two main narrative passages of the Hebrew Bible that utilize food imagery to convey allusion to sex are Genesis 1-3 and Song of Songs.

In her article, "The Food of Love: Gendered Food and Food Imagery in the Song of Songs," Athalya Brenner analyzes the prominent symbols contained within Song of Songs. She determines that unlike in the parallel Garden of Eden narrative, the orchards, gardens, and fields in Song of Songs "are more cultivated than natural, locations of food production rather than idyllic paradisical locations."[81] Even so, much of the food imagery is parallel. Both passages include vegetarian diets, with plant-based foods providing the symbolism.

While one could write an entire book on the usage of food imagery in sexual contexts, this section will focus on Song of Songs 2:3. There, it is written: "*c'tapuach b'atzei haya'ar kein dodi bein habanim, b'tzilo chimad'ti v'yashavti ufiryo matoq l'chiki-* - Like an apple tree among trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the youths. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my mouth." What a fascinating remark of this beloved. Her love is like an apple tree among trees of the forest. He is distinct, somehow, maybe taller, or with brighter, shinier fruits than his fellows. He is sturdy and with ample foliage, able to offer delightful shade. And, of course, his fruit is sweet on her

[81] Athalya Brenner, "The Food Of Love: Gendered Foods And Food Imagery In The Song Of Songs," *Semeia*, no.86 (1999): 101.

palate. As with many passages of Shir haShirim, this verse features ambiguities that must be clarified for a deeper understanding of the verse. This paper will explore the semantic ranges of several of the key words of the verse, in order to understand more fully why this beloved wants to declare, "*firyo matoq l'chiki*-- his fruit is sweet to my mouth."

Before the fruit can be examined, the *tapuach* itself must be understood. The *tapuach* is referred to twice outside of Shir haShirim: once in Joel 1:12, and once in Proverbs 25:11. The book of Joel begins with a description of a harrowing scene. The land is laid waste, and there is utter desolation. Temple service has been abandoned, and even the ground must mourn. To highlight this desolation, Joel says, "*hagefen hovishah, vhat'einah 'umlalah, rimon gam-tamar v'tapuach, kol atzei hasadeh yaveishu, ki hovish sason min b'nei adam*—the vine has dried up, the fig tree withers; pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are sear; and joy has dried up among men". Here, fig, pomegranate, palm, and *tapuach* trees are the verdant species that have been demolished through the ravaging of the land. In Proverbs 25:11, the *tapuach* refers not to the tree but to its fruit: "*tapuchei zahav b'maskiyyot kasef, davar davur al-ofnav*—like golden apples in silver showpieces is a phrase well turned." In his book, *A Word Fitly Spoken: Context, Transmission, and Adoption of the Parables of Jesus*, Philip Leroy Culbertson analyzes Proverbs 25:11 as a way to understand parables in general. He uses Maimonides' *Moreh Nebukhim* 6b-7a as a proof text for how this Proverbs verse comes to symbolize parables. Therein, Maimonides writes,

> When [this *tapuach* is] seen from a distance with a clouded comprehension, it would be possible to assume it to be an apple of silver, but to a perspicuous observer looking with trained comprehension, its contents are obvious: he recognizes it as an apple of gold. Similar are the parables of the prophets, peace be upon them. Their wisdom is efficacious in so many ways, including the amendment of social intercourse, as is shown by the exoteric sense of the Book of Proverbs and similar wisdom literature. Yet within them lies

wisdom even more efficacious for one's spiritual formation in accordance with their inherent [esoteric] truth.[82]

Instead of symbolizing the now-destroyed forest of Joel, the Proverbs verse sees the *tapuach* as the golden apple of a proverbial teaching, enshrined in a beautiful, but deceptive, filigree mask.

But what of the *tapuach* in Shir haShirim 2:3? In their commentary on Shir haShirim, Leonard S. Kravitz and Kerry M. Olitzky refer to the *Targum*'s understanding of *tapuach*. There, it reads: "just as the *etrog* is more desirable than those trees that bear no fruit, so the holy One gained more praise among the angels when God revealed God's Self at Mount Sinai and gave the Torah to the people."[83] So, *tapuach* comes to mean *etrog* in the *Targum*. Though the modern etrog is more like a lemon than an apple, both Rashi and Ibn Ezra understand even the biblical *tapuach* to be an apple. Kravitz and Olitzky cite a teaching of Gersonides, who taught, "just as the apple tree may be negatively affected in its growth by other trees, here it stands for an individual's psychic capacities, which can be negatively affected by other people.[84]" For Gersonides, the *tapuach* tree itself symbolizes a person, whose mood may be susceptible to others' negativity just as an apple tree can be spoiled by a bad neighboring tree. In his JPS commentary on Shir haShirim, Michael Fishbane presents the *tapuach*-as-apple convention to be in doubt by botany experts. Fishbane writes, "the cultivated apple was unknown in antiquity; and second, because wild apples were bitter and acidic"[85] and

---

[82] Philip L. Culbertson, *A Word Fitly Spoken: Context, Transmission, and Adoption of the Parables of Jesus* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995),10.
[83] Leonard S. Kravitz and Kerry M. Olitzky, *Shir HaShirim: A Modern Commentary on the Song of Songs* (New York: URJ Press, 2004), 19.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Michael Fishbane, *The JPS BIble Commentary: Song of Songs* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2015), 58.

suggests that the *tapuach* may more accurately refer to the *Prunus armenicaca*, a lush apricot known for its sweetness.

In the *Anchor Bible* volume on Song of Songs, Marvin H. Pope further analyzes the word *tapuach*, linking its root to *nafach*, "breath, pant" referring to the fruit's fragrance (supported by Song 7:9). Pope writes,

> The nature of the tree and the fruit is uncertain and there has been no lack of suggestions: apricot, orange, lemon, quince, apple. LXX melon and Vulgate *malus* favor the apple, …the apricot, orange, and lemon are recent importations in the area and the quince is unsuitable to the context of 7:9 since its fruit is odorless though sharp to the taste…The apple tree has special significance in the Sumerian sacred marriage mythology…the pleasures and dangers of dalliance under the apple tree are proverbial…Robert suggested, God and His dwelling are in a way identified here as in 5:15 and the fruits symbolize the sacrificial meal the same thought recurring in 2:4, 5:1, and 8:5.[86]

With all of these scholarly sources considered, *tapuach* in Shir haShirim 2:3 appears most closely aligned with some fragrant, fruit-bearing tree. However, it is not fully separate from the symbolism provided in Joel and Proverbs. Maimonides and other scholars saw the gold *tapuach* as the gem of learning to be gleaned from a proverb or teaching ensconced in an attractive and puzzling silver wrapping. Joel's scene of desolation comes in sharp contrast to the verdant imagery of Shir haShirim, whose depiction more closely relates to the bounty of the Garden of Eden than the destroyed wasteland of Joel.

Having examined the semantic range of the *tapuach*, it is important now to understand more about the *p'ri* of the beloved. *P'ri*, fruit, is used 119 times in Tanakh. The first time is used in the Creation account, wherein '*eitz p'ri*, fruit bearing trees, are listed among the vegetation God causes to come forth from the earth. A fruit bearing tree is what Eve and Adam eat from; in Genesis 3:6 it is written, "*vatiqach mipiryo vato'chal*,

[86] Marvin H. Pope, *The Anchor Bible: Song of Songs* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977), 371-2.

vatitein gam l'ishah imah vayochal—[Eve] took of its [forbidden] fruit and ate; she also gave some to her husband, and he ate".

P'ri does not always indicate edible fruit, though. In Rachel's barrenness, she is denied *p'ri-beten* (Gen. 30:2; see also Deut. 7:13, 28:4, 30:9, Lam. 2:20). In the saga of the spies (Numbers 13:27), Moses sends forth scouts who report that "*ba'nu el ha'aretz'asher sh'lachtanu, v'gam zavach chalav ud'vash hi v'zeh-piryah*—we came to the land you sent us to; it does indeed flow with milk and honey, and this is its fruit" (JPS). This fruit of the land, *p'ri ha'aretz*, was shown to the spies in the previous verse. In this sense *p'ri* can also refer to the first fruits that need to be brought as a form of *bikkurim* for the festival holiday of Shavuot (as in Deut. 26:1-11). Interestingly, *p'ri* can also indicate a reward or prize. In Psalm 127:3, it is written: "*hinei nachalat Adonai banim, sachar p'ri habaten*—Sons are the provision of the Lord; the fruit of the womb, His reward". There, *nachalat* and *sachar* are in parallel with each other, indicating that the reward, or inheritance, is sons, the fruit of the womb. *P'ri* could also mean reward in the *Eshet Chayil* passage of Proverbs (31:16,31) and in Psalm 58:12.

In Song 2:3, though, *u'firyo* refers not to fruit, nor to the produce of the earth, nor to a reward. Fishbane's *peshat* commentary remarks, "the imagery remains suggestive. Beneath him, she incorporates his fruit (*piryo*) and savors his sweet savor. His nurture is her sustenance."[87] Even at the *peshat* level, Fishbane reads into the sexual imagery utilized here. Considering the context of the *p'ri* in this verse, Kravitz and Orlitzky add,

> It is clear from this verse and others that the Bible is not afraid of explicit sexual imagery. In Judaism, sex within the context of a loving relationship is celebrated. Using sensual, graphically erotic images, the author is painting a word picture of pleasure, one that cannot easily be emulated in the relationship that the

[87] Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Song of Songs*, 58.

individual has with God. However, there are some who maintain that the traditional choreography of prayer mimics various aspects of the physical relationship between lovers.[88]

For these two scholars, the fruit of the beloved is, quite plainly, a sexual reference.

The use of sexual fruit metaphors is not limited to Shir haShirim. Western Kentucky University professor, Ronald A. Veenker, writes about these metaphors in his article, "Forbidden Fruit: Ancient Near Eastern Sexual Metaphors." There, he examines a wide range of sexual metaphors involving fruit, in biblical literature and beyond. The universality of sexual fruit metaphors, he writes, "may be linked to the intrinsic sexuality of fruit itself. Fruit is the reproductive part of the plant—its sexual organs…fruit makes an ideal metaphor for sex because the two have quite similar attributes...[these metaphors] are, therefore, present in the world's most contemporary as well as most ancient literature."[89] There are many elements that contribute to the universality of these fruity sexual metaphors. The fragrance of the fruit and its juiciness, the fact that the fruit is itself a reproductive part of the plant, and the fact that fruit was present in varying ecospheres, even in ancient times, are some such elements.

Throughout his article, Veenker compares Ancient Near Eastern literature to explore how sexual metaphors are utilized. In examining the Gilgamesh epic, Veenker finds that in her seduction speech to Gilgamesh, Ishtar proclaims, "'Come on, Gilgamesh, be my lover and grant me your fruit!'"[90] and that Tashmeitu wants to see Nabu's "fruit harvested," meaning that she "hopes to enjoy his penis to the point of ejaculation."[91] These explicitly sexual metaphors sexualize fruit and demonstrate how non-biblical

[88] Kravitz and Olitzsky, *Shir HaShirim: A Modern Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 19.
[89] Ronald A. Veenker, "Forbidden Fruit: Ancient Near Eastern Sexual Metaphors," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 70/71 (1999-2000): 58.
[90] Ibid. 59
[91] Ibid. 60

Ancient Near Eastern literature was incorporating sexual metaphors for fruit into their literature.

For Shir haShirim 2:3, Veenker offers a parallel reference of 'giving one's fruit' as used in the Talmud. He cites bB.Qam. 82a, wherein Ezra proclaims 7 *takanot*; one of these *takanot* "states that garlic should be eaten on Fridays because of the law of *`onah.* The rabbis understood *`onatah* in Exodus 21:10 as 'her time' on the basis of Mishnaic `onah 'time.' They take the phrase *`onatah lo yigra`* to mean that a husband owes his wife regular intercourse. Its scriptural proof lies in Psalm 1:3, 'who brings forth (literally "gives") his fruit in its season.' According to R. Judah, this refers to 'him who performs his marital duty every Friday night'" (Veenker 63). This passage of Talmud is interesting, because it is about the marital requirements of a husband and the aphrodisiatic nature of garlic, and the way that eating can impact sexual performance.

Eating and fruit metaphors are not only in Shir haShirim, of course. The other obvious biblical passage to consider is the narrative about the Garden of Eden. There, Veenker looks at the way Eve and Adam eat fruit and deal with the consequences of the knowledge that comes with it. Veenker writes,

> It turns out that 'eating fruit' in Genesis 3 is a simple metaphor for intercourse and, therefore, the biblical narrator wishes to tell the reader by means of this metaphor that Adam and Eve experienced sex for the first time in the Garden. That carnal knowledge is the first rung on the ladder of human 'knowing' is not only seen in Genesis, but is found in the structure of the Gilgamesh epic as well.[92]

Eve and Adam, then, come to "know" each other by way of eating fruit[93]. While this may not be as sexually explicit as the passages of Shir haShirim, it is certainly consequential.

---

[92] Ibid. 57

[93] Over the centuries it has been widely debated over whether Adam and Eve had sex before their expulsion. Jewish commentators tended to affirm while Christians tended to deny that they had sex in the garden.

Furthermore, it roots the biblical passage of Eden in a larger corpus of Ancient Near Eastern literature.

While Veenker's article is thought provoking and relevant, it is but one way of reading this passage of Shir haShirim. Pope, citing Immanuel[94], teaches that in this first section of Shir haShirim the beloved "merely declares her desire. The term fruit is here used in the sense of *words, wisdom & instruction*. [This] refers to the mind of a man when still young… when the powers of the body still control because he has not pursued his studies beyond mathematics and physics.[95] This verse, then, is a declaration of interest and desire; it expresses young love between two inexperienced (un-known) lovers. Fishbane offers a different perspective, from Rabbi Yose b. Zima in Song of Songs Rabbah. There, R. Yose teaches,

> On the one hand, the Song exalts God over all other gods; on the other, it glorifies Israel over other nations. For the latter rejected the 'apple tree' (God) and its apparent lack of 'shade' (they denied divine providence), whereas Israel desired this 'shade' and delighted in its benefits (the fruit of Torah). By exalting her Lord, Israel proclaims her theology; and by decrying the nations, she asserts religious dedication. The figure of 'delight' (or 'desire') adds a tone of spiritual passion; the imagery of 'fruit' (or 'benefit') marks a Torah-centered spirituality.[96]

Because R. Yose is motivated by a different ideology, he reads *p'ri* as the fruit of Torah, framing the entire interaction between these beloveds as a spiritual intimacy, not a sexual one. His understanding relates God and Israel as lovers, and sees the symbols of the verse

---

[94] Pope cites Immanuel in the context of an explanation of the history and evolution of the study of Song of Songs. He explains that the celebrated Moses Ibn Tibbon encouraged Immanuel to write a commentary, continuing in Ibn Tibbon's own study. Pope writes, "A few generations later Immanuel ben Solomon, spiritual leader of the Jewish community in Rome, known as 'the Prince of Knowledge in Rome,' produced a commentary elaborating the intellectual interpretation," and Pope includes excerpts of Immanuel's expositions as part of a series of examples of earlier exegesis on Song of Songs. See Pope, *The Anchor Bible; Song of Songs*, 105-108.
[95] Pope, *The Anchor Bible: Song of Songs*, 106-107.
[96] Fishbane, *The JPS Bible Commentary: Song of Songs*, 58.

as metaphors for elements of their relationship with each other. Kravitz and Olitzky's response to what they see as explicit sexual imagery deals with the positive perspective Judaism has towards sex in a loving relationship. They consider the erotic imagery used in Shir haShirim to be "one that cannot easily be emulated in the relationship that the individual has with God. However, there are some who maintain that the traditional choreography of prayer mimics various aspects of the physical relationship between lovers."[97] That is, some may argue that the only way to feel that sort of intimate relationship with God, the way it is portrayed in Shir haShirim, would be through the traditional prayer choreography. The swaying and bowing and other motions of prayer would be the way to emulate the sitting in the shade, and the prayer and study of Torah would be the eating of the fruit.

Now that *tapuach* and *p'ri* have been examined, we turn to *l'chiki*, the beloved's palate. While the *peshat* reading of the text would be that this word refers straightforwardly to the palate itself, the word *l'chiki* is used elsewhere in Tanakh and so its semantic range should be examined. In Ezekiel 3:26, the palate is used as a punishing tool. There, it is written, "*ul'shoncha adbiq el-chikecha, v'ne'elamta*—I will make your tongue cleave to your palate, and you shall be dumb" (JPS). There, a *ruach* has taken over Ezekiel and tells him that Ezekiel is bound, and that God will make his tongue cling to his palace and silence him, so that Ezekiel cannot reprove the rebellious ones; this cleft tongue will be undone when Ezekiel speaks God's words to the people. The palate, then, is the place where God controls Ezekiel's speech.

[97] Kravitz and Olitzsky, *Shir HaShirim: A Modern Commentary on the Song of Songs*, 19.

Job uses the term seven times. There, the palate is where food is tasted (Job 12:11, 34:3), is where speech is formed (29:10, 33:2), and, interestingly, is the place where Job discerns evil. In 6:30, he says, "*ha-yeish-bilshoni avlah, 'im-chiki lo'-yavin havvot*—Is injustice on my tongue? Can my palate not discern evil?" (JPS). In Job, the palate (and mouth) is where critical things happen, like decisions are proclaimed, power is asserted (or prevented, as in 29:10), and, of course, food is tasted. Proverbs pairs the palate with honey in two of its three uses (see Proverbs 5:3 and 24:13). There, the palate is a place of deception on behalf of a forbidden woman, whose palate is smoother than oil. It is also where honey's sweetness can be tasted. Finally, in 8:7, the palate is the place where truth emerges. Lamentations presents the palate in a scene of despair, wherein nursing infants are starving amid the desolation and despair. Lamentations 4:4 begins, "*davak l'shon yoneiq el-chiko batzama'*—the tongue of the suckling cleaves to its palate for thirst."

The two references in Psalms, though, are two of the most interesting for Shir haShirim 2:3. In Psalm 119:103 it is written, "*mah-niml'tzu l'chiki 'imratecha midvash l'fi*—how pleasing is Your word to my palate, sweeter than honey". In this, the longest Psalm, the psalmist declares his own piety and love of studying God's instruction. The palate could be the place of articulation, and also the place where the sweetness of the learning is felt. Considering the different modes of transmission within the traditions of Jewish text, it could be that the learner here has indeed internalized his learning through his mouth, articulating them and committing them to memory. Finally, in one of the most familiar biblical references to *lichki*, Psalm 137:6 reads, "*tidbak-lshoni l'chiki 'im-lo' 'ezk'reichi 'im-lo' 'a'aleh 'et-yerushalim 'al ro'sh simchati*—let my tongue stick to palate if I cease to think of you, if I do not keep Jerusalem in memory even at my

happiest hour." Because Psalm 137 is used liturgically, this phrase is the most frequently used verse that references *lichki*. While there may not be an intentional inter-textual relationship between Song 2:3 and Psalm 137:6, it is important to consider how the reading of the Psalm text might affect the reading of the Song text.[98] The palate in Psalm 137:6 is, as in Ezekiel 3:26 and Job 29:10, is the place of punishment and limitation. The Psalmist makes an oath with a self-curse in place as punishment. Should the psalmist forget Jerusalem, his tongue should cleave to his palate, cutting off his ability to communicate and sing God's praises. In the Song verse, though, there seems to be little concern for communicative limitation or palatal punishment. In Psalm 119, the palate is the place where sweetness is sensed; it seems that the same meaning is intended in Song 2:3.

Given all of these various understandings of *tapuach*, *p'ri,* and *l'chiki*, how are we to understand "Like an apple tree among trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the youths. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my mouth"? The *tapuach* may not indicate the sweet, juicy, modern apple; Fishbane's suggestion of a lush apricot seems as logical as any. The tree itself, *ba'atzei haya'ar*, amid the trees of the forest, is distinct. Because it is used in parallel to describe the beloved's love, *kein dodi bein habanim*, it would make sense that this *tapuach* is superlative in all possible respects: it is the tallest, the most verdant, with the most prolific fruit yield of all the trees. Though these superlatives are elliptical, and not explicitly noted in the text, it stands to reason that the young beloved is so enamored by her *dod* that he is the only tree in the forest worth

[98] This is, of course, the point. The allegorical reading of Song of Songs was enabled by the fruitful imagery of Torah in Psalm 1, 19 and 119. Though intertextuality is not identical with allusion, readers of Song 2:3 may hear a resonant allusion to Psalm 137:6.

looking at (or sitting under). She delights to sit in his shade, which provides either a physical description of their power dynamic (meaning that the *dod* stands over her and she sits subservient at his feet) or, it describes the way their interactions make her feel safe and protected by him.

U'firyo matoq l'chiki: his fruit is sweet to my palate. Here, the various readings make known their ideologies. One reading for a relationship between God and Israel, rather than two human beloveds, will take the fruit to mean the wisdom of Torah (with support from Ps 119:103) sweeter than honey on the tongue. This verse becomes a religious spiritual experience, wherein the speaker (symbolizing Israel) takes in as much of the sweet Torah as she can. The reading presented by Veenker, though, is more compelling here. This verse seems to be a sexually charged description of a pleasant sexual experience between two lovers. Based on the other Ancient Near Eastern use of fruit as sexual metaphors this particular verse, as well as the rest of Shir haShirim and related passages in Genesis, utilizes the eating of fruit to symbolize a sexual experience.

When read in context, this verse of Shir haShirim reads like the introductory portion of the telling of a night of romance. Song 2:4-6 read, "He brought me to the banquet room and his look of love was over me. 'Sustain me with raisin cakes, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love.' His left hand was under my head, his right arm embraced me." This young woman is worn out from a night of intimacy with her *dod*, to the point where she calls out her requests for sweet, edible sustenance. The *tapuach* of 2:3, the symbolic tree that bears the fruit so sweet to her mouth, is the same tree whose actual fruit reenergizes her when she is *cholat ahavah*, love sick, faint from her night of

passion. This use of the *tapuach* in verses 2:3 and 2:5 further emphasizes the metaphorical nature of 2:3 and all that it symbolizes.

Excursus 3: Dreams

In biblical literature, dreams serve as important tools of communication. Some prophets receive their divine messages through a *chalom lailah*—night dream. In Numbers 12:6, God tells Aaron and Miriam specifically, **"**When a prophet of the Lord arises among you, *'etvada'*, I make Myself known to him in a vision, *bachalom 'adaber-bo*--I speak with him in a dream." Joseph, the quintessential biblical dreamer, dreams four of his six dreams about food-related imagery. Dreams happen in several contexts in biblical narratives, and this excursus will analyze passages wherein dreams are related to either food or eating and drinking.

C1. Genesis 40 (Pharaoh's Cupbearer and Baker)

In this passage, the cupbearer and the baker of Pharaoh have been put into prison where Joseph has been confined. Upon sleeping in prison, they each dream dreams. When all the men wake up in the morning, Joseph sees that the baker and the cupbearer are distraught. Joseph asks why they appear downcast, and they tell him that they have each had dreams, but have nobody who can interpret them. Joseph tells them that surely God can interpret the dreams, and that they should tell him, Joseph, about their dreams. The cupbearer tells his dream first: it involves a vine with three branches, barely budded, and suddenly blossoms bloom and ripen into grapes. The cupbearer presses the grapes into Pharaoh's cup, and gives the cup to pharaoh. Joseph interprets the dream as a sign of the Pharaoh's upcoming pardon of the cupbearer's sentence. Seeing how favorably the cupbearer's dream was interpreted, the baker then shares his dream with Joseph. The baker dreamed of three baskets on his head, with a full basket for Pharaoh exposed to the birds *'ocheil 'otam* who were eating out of the basket. Joseph interprets the baker's

dream as well, but sees it as a sign of an impending execution, not of redemption. On the third day, the day of the interpreted redemption and execution, Pharaoh throws a birthday feast (*vaya'as mishteh*) for all of his servants (40:20). The cupbearer is restored to his employ and the baker is impaled as predicted. In this narrative, both of the men who have the dreams are involved in food-related jobs, and both of them have dreams that utilized eating and drinking symbols as part of their figurative content. Finally, the fulfillment of the dreams' content comes about in the setting of a feast.

C2. Genesis 41 (Pharaoh)

In this passage, Joseph continues interpreting dreams. This time, though, the dreamer is Pharaoh. Pharaoh dreams of standing by the Nile; first, seven healthy cows come up from the Nile, followed by seven gaunt cows. The gaunt cows eat the healthy cows, and Pharaoh wakes up. He falls back asleep, and has a second food-related dream. This time, he dreams of seven healthy ears of grain, growing near seven thin, scorched ears of grain. The thin grain swallowed up the healthy grain, and Pharaoh awakens once more. None of Pharaoh's own men could interpret his dream, so the cupbearer refers Pharaoh to Joseph. Joseph appears before Pharaoh, hears of his dreams, and interprets them. Joseph understands the dreams as a message from God, that there will be seven years of *sava' gadol*, great abundance, followed by seven years of *ra'av*, famine (41:29-30). Joseph understands both of Pharaoh's dreams as symbols sent by God to represent God's plan for the land of Egypt.

Joseph proposes a plan to Pharaoh, wherein Pharaoh will find an advisor, gather all the food of the good years, and store the food for the years of famine. This narrative

demonstrates how food can serve as the symbol of abundance and famine in a dream where God is revealing some element of the future to a biblical figure.

C3. 1 Kings 3:4-15 (Solomon)

In this passage, Solomon is the dreamer. God appears to Solomon in a dream by night, and Solomon asks for a sense of understanding in his new role as king. God is pleased by Solomon's request. God assures Solomon that because he asked for discernment instead of riches, God will grant him riches and glory and long life if Solomon continues to walk in God's ways. Solomon wakes up, offers burnt offerings and sacrifices, *vaya'as mishteh l'chol-'avadav*, and made a feast for all of his courtiers (1 Kings 3:15). Solomon's night vision of God is followed by a cultic meal and banquet.

C. Conclusion: Dreams

Dreams can serve as an important mode of revelation. Sometimes, these scenes become opportunities for food imagery to communicate. The three examples above represent ways in which the context of a dream or its content can be related to food or eating. In the first, Pharaoh's cupbearer and baker each has his own food-related dreams, which Joseph interprets to symbolize their redemption and demise, respectively. In the second, Joseph interprets Pharaoh's own dreams of cannibalistic cows and grain to represent periods of abundance and famine in the land of Egypt. Finally, in Solomon's dream, God assures Solomon he will receive all that he asks for and more. Though the dream itself does not include food imagery, as in the previous cases, it is followed by a *mishteh*, a feast, hosted by Solomon for his courtiers. While these are not all of the dreams presented in biblical literature, these scenes serve as examples of how a dream might be impacted by eating or drinking, in symbol or context.

Excursus 4: Etiologies

Eating and drinking are elements of many biblical etiologies. Below is a selection of etiologies, wherein eating and drinking are pieces of the origin narratives. These are mostly place name etiologies, with one exception: manna. These etiologies are a selection of the etiologies that include reference to food or eating, and are miraculous.

D1. Genesis 16:6-15 (Be'er-Lachai-ro'i--Hagar)

In this passage, Sarai treats Hagar harshly, and Hagar flees. An angel of God finds her by a spring of water in the wilderness, and instructs her to go back to Sarai despite the harsh treatment Hagar anticipates. The angel announces that Hagar is pregnant with a son to be called Ishmael, and that God will greatly increase her offspring. After the angel finishes describing Ishmael's future characteristics, Hagar calls to God (using the theophoric El-Roi, God who sees me). The biblical narrator continues that the well was called Be'er-lachai- ro'i, between Kadesh and Bered.

In this annunciation scene, there is no explicit mention of eating or drinking. However, Hagar is found near a well in the wilderness, presumably because this spring of water would be a lifeline for her.

D2. Exodus 15:22-26 (Marah--Moses)

In this passage, Moses takes the Israelites away from the Sea of Reeds and into the wilderness. There, they find no water, even after three days. When they arrive at Marah (bitter), they cannot drink the bitter water, *ki marim hem*, because they are bitter. God shows Moses a piece of wood, which Moses throws into the water, *vayimt'qu hamayim*, and the waters become sweet. By tossing the divinely appointed wood into the water, the waters become drinkable.

This is an etiology, because v. 23 informs readers that the Israelites could not drink the water of Marah because it was *marim*, bitter, therefore *qara'-shamah marah*, that place is called Marah.

D3. Exodus 16 (Manna)

In this first of two passages about manna, the Israelites are in the wilderness, grumbling against Moses and Aaron. They recall their cherished treats of Egypt, and the way their bellies were always full of bread. They felt it would be better to be well-fed slaves in Egypt than starving in the wilderness. In response to all of the grumbling, and with the additional motive of testing the Israelites' faith in God, God proclaims to Moses and Aaron that God will rain down bread from the sky. Moses stands up to the people, who grumble against him, saying, "'since it is the Lord,' Moses continued, 'who will give you flesh to eat in the evening and bread in the morning to the full, because the Lord has heard the grumblings you utter against Him, what is our part? Your grumbling is not against us, but against the Lord!'" (v18).

The biblical narrator describes the scene wherein the Israelites first find the manna: "In the evening quail appeared and covered the camp; in the morning there was a fall of dew about the camp. When the fall of dew lifted, there, over the surface of the wilderness, lay a fine and flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, '*Man-hu?* What is it?' — for they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "'That is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat'" (Ex. 16:13-15). The Israelites have encountered an unusual substance, and, though Moses calls it *lechem*, bread, the biblical narrator's description is that it is a flaky, frosty-looking substance.

In his article, "'What is it?' Interpreting Exodus 16:15," Zvi Ron analyzes how the Israelites first react when experiencing the manna provided to them, and how the manna comes to get its name in Exodus 16:31. Ron wants to determine whether the phrase "*man-hu*" is a Hebrew phrase (because, as Ron notes, the proper Hebrew would have been "*mah-hu*") and whether it is a question or statement. Ron analyzes modern scholarship on Semitic linguistics and biblical dialects; he cites Cassuto's explanation, that "in ancient Canaanite languages the word for 'what' is *man*" and Sarna's teaching, "that in Ugaritic it is *mn* and in the Canaanite of the El Amarna letters it is *mannu*. The Israelites, then, were using an 'ancient dialect variant.'"[99] The biblical phrase "*man-hu,*" then, would be an archaism. Citing Amos Hakham's *Da'at Mikra* commentary, Ron writes "it is customary for people to use archaic terms to display great astonishment."[100] The point remains: *man*, manna, is an expression, not a name of a divinely provided food.

In his article, "Manna and the Sabbath: A Literary-Theological Reading of Exodus 16," Stephen Geller reads the passage of Exodus 16 as a reflection of the Sabbath institution in the priestly source. As Geller notes, there are two versions of the manna story interwoven in Exodus 16. One is "evidently a tale focusing on the testing Israel's ability to follow orders…the other tale was mainly etiological, explaining the desert origin of the bread before the Presence in the central shrine as a daily offering that was placed in front of the curtain that covered the entrance to the Holiest Place, where God

[99] Zvi Ron, "'What Is It?' Interpreting Exodus 16:15," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 38, no.4 (2010): 231.
[100] Ibid.

rested."[101] These two stories, which Geller refers to as Covenantal and Priestly strands, are not woven seamlessly.

Following Geller's reading of the covenantal strand, the story of the manna is part of a wider set of stories involving covenant and cloud. If the manna is used as the testing material for the Israelites' faith in God, then having the manna presented as a type of rain is appropriately symbolic. As Geller writes, "in covenant religion rain has a special theological meaning as the prime symbol of divine providence, which is also minatory, since rainfall is also dependent on Israel's performance of the laws…manna stands for all the blessings that will come from the covenantal relationship to god, but also for the penalties that will result from disloyalty."[102] Manna and the Sabbath are linked in Exodus 16, where "not resting but testing is the issue.[103]" By being loyal and trusting of God, the Israelites would uphold their covenant.

Following Geller's reading of the priestly strand, the story of the manna is one upholding the miraculous nature of manna "as divine suspension of the ordinary rules of creation."[104] In fact, Geller claims that Exodus 16 needs to be read in light of Genesis 1-2, especially due to the invoking of Shabbat in verse 16:29. He writes that there is a "further parallelism within Exodus 16 between the actions of God and those of humanity, represented by Israel. Simply put, on the sixth day double manna falls because God will stop providing it on the seventh day. No reason for this stoppage is stated. In Exodus 16 it

[101] Stephen Geller, "Manna and Sabbath: A Literary-Theological Reading of Exodus 16," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 59, no.1 (2005): 7.
[102] Ibid. 10
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid. 11

appears to be arbitrary and inexplicable. But there is a significant parallelism to the creation account, where ceasing on the seventh day marks the completion of creation."[105]

No matter whether readers focus on the covenantal strand or the priestly strand, or both, the issue of manna-as-etiology remains. The name manna (Hebrew *man*) in and of itself captures the mysterious nature of this God-given provision. What is it? Exactly! In verse 31, the Israelites name the manna *man*, quoting their own exclamation (or question) upon encountering the substance the first time in verse 15. This passage is immediately followed by another etiology story; the Israelites complain about their lack of water, and the place is named Massah and Meribah.

D4. Exodus 17:1-7 (Massah and Meribah in Refidim--Moses)

In this scene, the Israelites are camping in Refidim, and there is no water for them to drink. They complain to Moses, saying "*t'nu-lanu mayim v'nishteh*, give us water, so we can drink." Moses tries to deflect their thirsty complaints to God. The people continue to grumble against Moses, longing for their time in Egypt (where, at least, they had water). Moses cries out to God for advice, and God tells Moses to take some of the elders of Israel and pass before the people, and to take the same *mateh*, staff, with which he had previously struck the Nile. God will stand before Moses on the designated rock at Horeb, and God tells Moses to strike the rock and water will issue from it, *v'shatah ha'am*, and the people will drink. Then, the biblical narrator provides an etiology. That place was called *Massah uMerivah*, Masah (Test) and Meribah (Quarrel), because there the Israelites quarreled because they tried God, saying, "is God present among us or not?" (v. 7).

[105] Ibid. 14

Here, the miracle is the thirst-quenching water coming from the designated rock at God's command. The place name described in the etiology reflects the quarreling and testing of God, not the water itself.

D5. Num 11:34 (Qivrot Hata'avah)

In this passage, the Israelites once again encounter manna. The Israelites are complaining and grumbling against God. As in Exodus 17, they recall fondly the foods (like fish and fresh vegetables) they used to eat in Egypt. They had manna, but no meat, and they *hit'avvu ta'atvah*, craved *basar*, meat, gluttonously. The biblical narrator describes the manna differently in this passage than in Exodus 16; there, it was "like coriander seed, white, and it tasted like wafers in honey" (16:31), but here it is "like coriander seed, and in color it was like bdellium" (11:7) and the people would prepare it as cakes flavored like rich cream.

Moses can no longer bear the weight of the people's burden, and he cries out to God. God describes a way to share the burden among the elders of Israel, by distributing the spirit (*ruach*) that rests upon Moses to these elders. God also instructs Moses to tell the people that they should purify themselves because the next day, God will give them meat to eat[106]. God will provide such vast quantities of meat that it will come out through their nostrils. Moses is concerned by the logistics (even if they slaughter all of their flocks, how could it ever be enough to feed so many people meat for such a period of time?) but God insists that God's own power is undoubtedly sufficient. God floods the encampment with quail. Then, *habasar 'odenu bein shineihem*, with the meat still between their teeth, God strikes the people with a plague in anger.

[106] According to Leviticus 17 all meat consumption is through *shlamim* sacrifice. All sacrifice requires purity.

In this passage, the etiology is not of the manna itself, as it was in Exodus 16. Instead, the biblical narrator informs readers that this place was called Qivrot Hata'avah (Graves of the Craving), because that is where they *qavru 'et-ha'am hamit'avvim*, buried the craving people.

D6. Numbers 20:2-13 (Meribah in Kadesh—Moses)

In this passage, the Israelites are thirsty once again. They gather as a community against Moses and Aaron to complain. Rather than complain directly about being thirsty, they cry out, "if only we had perished when our brothers perished at the instance of the Lord!" referring to the Korah incident. The Israelites continue, longing for the creature comforts of Egypt, finally naming their issue of thirst *u'mayim ayin lishtot* (v. 5). God speaks to Moses, commanding that he and Aaron take the *mateh*, staff, assemble the community, and verbally order the rock to yield water. God tells Moses "*v'natan meimav, v'hotzeita lahem mayim min-hasela' vhishqita 'et-ha'eidah v'et-b'iram,* you will produce water for them from the rock and give water to the congregation and their beasts." In verse 11, Moses makes the grave mistake of striking the rock twice, rather than simply speaking to it. Despite his error, water does come forth from the rock, allowing the community and animals to drink. The biblical narrator concludes this passage with the etiology, that *heimah mei m'rivah,* those are the waters of Merivah (quarrel), because there the Israelites complained against God, and through those waters God affirmed God's holiness.

D7. Judges 15:18-19 (En-hakkorei of Lechi--Samson)

In this passage, Samson's thirst is directly related to a place-name etiology. In verse 18, *vayitzma' m'od,* Samson is very thirsty, and he cries out to God; why should

God have let Samson been victorious over his enemy just to die of thirst? God splits open a hollow at Lechi, and water gushes out; *vayeisht, vatashov rucho vaychi*, and Samson drinks and his spirit returns to him, and he is revived. The biblical narrator goes on to say that it is this reason that the place is called *'ein haqoreh 'asher belechi ad hayom hazeh*, En-hakkore of Lechi, up until today.

D. Conclusion: Etiologies Involving Miracles

While these scenes do not constitute an exhaustive examination of etiologies in the Bible, they do demonstrate the way eating and/or drinking, and miracles, are involved in the etiologies of places in the biblical narrative. Wells, springs, and regions are named among the many biblical etiologies connected with either eating or the miraculous provision of food and water.

Excursus 5: Military Leadership

In the Hebrew Bible, military leadership is presented with Yahweh as the leader exemplar; from leading the Israelites away from the pursuing Egyptians in Exodus 14:30, to beating Amalek in Exodus 17:8-16, to defending Gibeon in Joshua 10:8-14, God[107] is the ultimate military leader. Human military leaders can hardly compare to God, and in biblical narratives, human leaders of militaries face serious obstacles, often involving food-related issues. This section will analyze several scenes wherein human leaders of militaries are either thwarted by their inability to obtain and give adequate provisions to their troops, or where an eating scene provides the context for a leader's victory or failure.

E1. Abraham

Abraham is the exemplary host in biblical narrative, but he does not just serve food in contexts of hospitality. In Genesis 14, Abram's nephew, Lot, is seized by invaders. Abram springs into action, taking his entire household (of 318 men) and pursues the invaders. Abram successfully brings back Lot and his possessions from Chedorlaomer. King Melchizedek of Salem, a priest of *El Elyon*, offers bread and wine, and a blessing to God. Abram boldly refuses to accept even a thread or a sandal strap as enemy spoil. Further, he insists upon paying for everything his men, including Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre, have consumed. This refusal of personal enrichment symbolizes Abram's personal integrity. In addition to his military triumph and personal rescue of his kinsman, he insists on paying for the hospitality he has received.

E2. King David

[107] One of the many names of God, *YHWH Tzva'ot*, Lord of Hosts, indicates God as the supreme military leader (cf. 1 Samuel 15:2).

Throughout the narratives involving King David's military leadership, David is usually portrayed as a capable and worthy leader. In contexts dealing with military leadership and provisions, David typically receives provisions from others.

However, before David reaches the height of his career, his father Jesse sends him with a gift for his brothers. In I Samuel 17:17-19, David's brothers are with Saul's troops in a war against the Philistines. Jesse sends David with *'eifat haqali' hazeh, va'asarah lechem hazeh…v'et 'aseret charitzei hechalav ha'eileh*—an ephah of this parched corn, these ten loaves of bread, and these ten cheeses (1 Sam 17:17-19) to his brothers and their captain, to see how they are faring in the war. David goes down to deliver the parcel, and he encounters Goliath. Jesse's sending of David on this provision delivery mission provides the setting for the epic battle between David and Goliath.

Later, though, David does receive provisions from his loyal followers, as in 2 Samuel 17:27-29. There, David reaches Mahanaim, and Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai present him with couches, basins, earthenware. They also give him *v'chitim, us'orim v'qemach v'qali, ufol va'adashim v'qali, ud'vash c'chem'ah, vtzo'n ushfot baqar*, wheat, barely, flour, parched grain, beans, lentils, honey, curds, a flock, and cheese from the herd dor David and the troops to eat. They provide these items *ki 'amru ha'am ra'eiv v'ayeif v'tzmei bamidbar*, for they knew that the troops must have grown hungry, faint, and thirsty in the wilderness (2 Samuel 17:28-29). These three men provide more than a meager offering of bread and water. They take care of a place to rest, and a bounty of hearty food to revive the men from their exhaustion in battle.

While Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai are generous with their offering, theirs is not the only model of interacting with a hungry king[108]. In 1 Samuel 25, Nabal experiences divine punishment for withholding the provisions he is capable of giving. His wife, Abigail, is eventually rewarded for her generosity and resourcefulness. The biblical narrator indicates in the introduction to Nabal and Abigail that the woman was intelligent and beautiful, but the man, a Calebite[109], was a hard man and an evildoer (1 Sam 25:3). Nabal's evildoing includes refusing to offer provisions to David. When asked to provide food, Nabal answers, "*v'laqachti 'et-lachmi v'et-meimay, v'et tivchati 'asher tavachti l'goz'zay, v'natati la'anashim 'asher lo' yadati 'ai mizeh heimah?*—should I take my bread and my water, and the meat that I slaughtered for my own shearers, and give them to men who come from I don't know where?" (25:11). Nabal does not provide what he can to David and his men, but his wife puts together two hundred loaves of bread, two jars of wine, five dressed sheep, five *seahs* of parched corn, two hundred raisin cakes, and two hundred cakes of pressed figs (25:18). David blesses her in the name of God and accepts her bountiful offering. Ten days later, Nabal is struck dead by God, at which point David proposes marriage to Abigail. Nabal is punished for withholding provisions from the king, and his wife, Abigail, is promptly rewarded for her generosity.

E3. Failure to Provide

In some cases, the failure of a leader is demonstrated by his failure to provide adequate food to his troops. Just as Nabal is punished for his refusal to provide food for King David, so too are leaders punished for their own withholding of provisions or

[108] Though, at this point in the story, David is an outlaw. He is not yet a king. His request is extortionary; he wants Nabal to pay "protection" in the form of provisions.
[109] Dr. Sperling: "He ain't nothin' but a hound dog."

failure to provide sufficient food. In Judges 8:4-17, Gideon crosses the Jordan River with his 300 *'ayeifim*--exhausted (even famished) men. Gideon asks the people of Succoth to give him *kikrot lechem*, loaves of bread, for the famished men (8:5). The people of Succoth refuse, mocking Gideon and requesting evidence of his capture of Zebah and Zalmunna. Gideon goes to Penuel and makes the same request; they too refuse to offer bread. Gideon comes back to the people of both towns, with Zebah and Zalmunna, and punishes the elders of each city with desert thorns. As in the case of Nabal, those who refuse provisions from the military leader are punished.

E. Conclusion: Military Leadership

While of course, without the requisite provisions, no leader could expect his forces to be successful, it is clear from biblical narratives that food symbolizes more than the necessary fuel for men in battle. These three sets of passages indicate that the failure to provide food is symbolic of failure to lead (or support leaders) adequately.

Dessert: Conclusion

At the outset of this project, I had no idea I would discover such a wide range of uses of eating and drinking motifs in biblical narrative. I knew that a large piece of the Hebrew Bible is focused on dietary laws and ritual eating, but I was surprised to find such a vast variety of narrative uses of eating beyond dietary restrictions.

This thesis has explored how eating and drinking motifs are used in scenes of hospitality, covenant, miracles, perfidy, and more. What fascinates me is the extent to which foods can be used as symbols. In hospitality scenes, food preparation and urgency in serving are critical components. Hospitality leads to a bond of trust between host and guest, and figures like Abraham become exemplars of biblical hospitality. In covenant scenes, the sharing of meals is an important symbol of creating or reinforcing covenantal relationships. Families are formed and agreements are finalized over shared foods. In miracle scenes, God's provision of food or drink protects God's prophets and God's people. In scenes of perfidy, food is a tool of betrayal. Because sharing food is such a strong marker of relational connection, an act of deception connected to food is all the more deceitful.

In the excurses, special themes relating to biblical uses of eating and drinking were analyzed. There, scenes suggesting vegetarianism as a biblical ideal were examined; though meat holds a special status in Israelite diets, there are readings that suggest the vegetarianism of the antediluvian era was the biblical ideal. In the excursus on food and sex, scenes using food symbols in sexual contexts were analyzed. The biblical writers used the sensual parallels between sex and the experience of eating in Song of Songs, with links to the narrative of the Garden of Eden. In the excursus on dreams, there were

several scenes that used food imagery as symbols for power, transitions, or visions of the future. The excursus on etiologies demonstrated that some place name etiologies are rooted in or connected to divinely provided foods. Places where God miraculously provides for the people are included among etiologies described by the biblical writers. Finally, in the excursus on military leadership, scenes were presented where either military leaders fail to provide adequate provisions to their troops, or where provisions are supplied by God.

Examining something as quotidian as eating, and seeing how it is utilized in such powerful symbolic ways, has deepened my understanding of biblical literature. The corpus is even richer in complexity and literary style than I had previously realized. In a future project, I would be interested in examining similar themes through the lens of an anthropological study; I would want to look at what foods were actually being used in what ways, and how food preparation was actually done.

The corpus of biblical literature primarily uses food as a symbol of connection, not just everyday survival. When eating and drinking are depicted in a biblical narrative, it is not because human beings must digest food to survive. Instead, the eating and drinking serve as significant symbols of something deeper. This feels intuitive; just as we bond by breaking bread together, so too do biblical figures create relationships over food.

Bibliography

Ahroni, Reuben. “Why Did Esau Spurn the Birthright: A Study in Biblical Interpretation.” *Judaism* 29, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 323–31.

Alter, Robert. *The Art of Biblical Narrative*. Revised. New York: Basic Books, 2011.

Appler, Deborah A. “From Queen To Cuisine: Food Imagery In The Jezebel Narrative.” *Semeia*, no. 86 (February 1999): 55–71.

Arterbury, Andrew. “Abraham’s Hospitality among Jewish and Early Christian Writers: A Tradition History of Gen 18:1-16 and Its Relevance for the Study of the New Testament.” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 359–76.

Brenner, Athalya. “The Food Of Love: Gendered Foods And Food Imagery In The Song of Songs.” *Semeia*, no. 86 (February 1999): 101.

Brumberg-Kraus, Jonathan. “‘Better a Meal of Vegetables with Love’: The Symbolic Meaning of Vegetables in Rabbinic and Post-Rabbinic Midrash on Proverbs 15.17.” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 104, no. 1 (2014): 46–56.

Carroll, Robert P. “YHWH’s Sour Grapes: Images of Food And Drink in The Prophetic Discourses Of The Hebrew Bible.” *Semeia*, no. 86 (February 1999): 113.

Cohen, Jeffrey M. “Abraham’s Hospitality.” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (September 2006): 168–72.

Culbertson, Philip Leroy. *A Word Fitly Spoken: Context, Transmission, and Adoption of the Parables of Jesus*. Suny Series in Religious Studies. State University of New York Press, 1995.

De Hemmer Gudme, Anne Katrine. “‘If I Were Hungry, I Would Not Tell You’ (Ps 50, 12): Perspectives on the Care and Feeding of the Gods in the Hebrew Bible.” *SJOT: Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 28, no. 2 (July 2014): 172–84.

Feeley-Harnik, Gillian. *The Lord’s Table: The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.

Fishbane, Michael. *The JPS BIble Commentary: Song of Songs*. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2015.

Geller, Stephen A. “Manna and Sabbath: A Literary-Theological Reading of Exodus 16.” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 59, no. 1 (January 2005): 5–16.

JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh. Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1999.

Kravitz, Leonard S., and Kerry M. Olitzky. *Shir HaShirim: A Modern Commentary on the Song of Songs*. New York, NY: URJ Press, 2004.

Lasine, Stuart. “Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot’s Hospitality in an Inverted World.” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 1984, 37–59.

London, Gloria. “Food in Ancient Judah: Domestic Cooking in the Time of the Hebrew Bible.” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, no. 372 (November 2014): 234–36.

Mann, Thomas W. “Not by Word Alone: Food in the Hebrew Bible.” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible & Theology* 67, no. 4 (October 2013): 351–62.

McKinlay, Judith E. “To Eat or Not To Eat: Where Is Wisdom in This Choice?” *Semeia* 86 (1999): 73–84.

Pope, Marvin H. *The Anchor Bible: Song of Songs*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977.

Rendsburg, Gary A. “The Vegetarian Ideal in the Bible.” *Studies in Jewish Civilization* 15 (2005).
Ron, Zvi. “‘What Is It?’ Interpreting Exodus 16:15.” *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (October 2010): 230–36.
Sarna, Nahum. *JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis*. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989.
Sharon, Diane M. *Patterns of Destiny: Narrative Structures of Foundation and Doom in the Hebrew Bible*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2002.
———. “When Fathers Refuse To Eat: The Trope of Rejecting Food And Drink In Biblical Narrative.” *Semeia*, no. 86 (February 1999): 135.
Shemesh, Yael. “Vegetarian Ideology in Talmudic Literature and Traditional Biblical Exegesis.” *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism*, 2006, 141–66. doi:5/5/15.
Sperling, S. David. “Rethinking Covenant in Late Biblical Books.” *Biblica* 70, no. 1 (1989): 50–73.
Veenker, Ronald A. “Forbidden Fruit: Ancient Near Eastern Sexual Metaphors.” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 70/71 (2000 1999): 57–73.
Zakovitch, Yair. “Disgrace: The Lies of the Patriarch.” *Social Research* 75, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 1035–58.

Appendix A—Literary Stations of Sister/Wife Scenes (3 Pages)

Literary Station	בראשית כו	בראשית כ	בראשית יב
Context for displacement theme	**א** וַיְהִי רָעָב, בָּאָרֶץ, מִלְּבַד הָרָעָב הָרִאשׁוֹן, אֲשֶׁר הָיָה בִּימֵי אַבְרָהָם; וַיֵּלֶךְ יִצְחָק אֶל-אֲבִימֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ-פְּלִשְׁתִּים, גְּרָרָה. **ב** וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו יְהוָה, וַיֹּאמֶר אַל-תֵּרֵד מִצְרָיְמָה: שְׁכֹן בָּאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֹמַר אֵלֶיךָ. **ג** גּוּר בָּאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת, וְאֶהְיֶה עִמְּךָ וַאֲבָרְכֶךָּ: כִּי-לְךָ וּלְזַרְעֲךָ, אֶתֵּן אֶת-כָּל-הָאֲרָצֹת הָאֵל, וַהֲקִמֹתִי אֶת-הַשְּׁבֻעָה, אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם אָבִיךָ. **ד** וְהִרְבֵּיתִי אֶת-זַרְעֲךָ, כְּכוֹכְבֵי הַשָּׁמָיִם, וְנָתַתִּי לְזַרְעֲךָ, אֵת כָּל-הָאֲרָצֹת הָאֵל; וְהִתְבָּרְכוּ בְזַרְעֲךָ, כֹּל גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ. **ה** עֵקֶב, אֲשֶׁר-שָׁמַע אַבְרָהָם בְּקֹלִי; וַיִּשְׁמֹר, מִשְׁמַרְתִּי, מִצְוֹתַי, חֻקּוֹתַי וְתוֹרֹתָי.	**א** וַיֵּסַע מִשָּׁם אַבְרָהָם אַרְצָה הַנֶּגֶב, וַיֵּשֶׁב בֵּין-קָדֵשׁ וּבֵין שׁוּר; וַיָּגָר, בִּגְרָר.	
Anticipating Danger	**ו** וַיֵּשֶׁב יִצְחָק, בִּגְרָר. **ז** וַיִּשְׁאֲלוּ אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם, לְאִשְׁתּוֹ, וַיֹּאמֶר, אֲחֹתִי הִוא: כִּי יָרֵא, לֵאמֹר אִשְׁתִּי, פֶּן-יַהַרְגֻנִי אַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם עַל-רִבְקָה, כִּי-טוֹבַת מַרְאֶה הִוא.	**ב** וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל-שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ, אֲחֹתִי הִוא;	**יא** וַיְהִי, כַּאֲשֶׁר הִקְרִיב לָבוֹא מִצְרָיְמָה; וַיֹּאמֶר, אֶל-שָׂרַי אִשְׁתּוֹ, הִנֵּה-נָא יָדַעְתִּי, כִּי אִשָּׁה יְפַת-מַרְאֶה אָתְּ. **יב** וְהָיָה, כִּי-יִרְאוּ אֹתָךְ הַמִּצְרִים, וְאָמְרוּ, אִשְׁתּוֹ זֹאת; וְהָרְגוּ אֹתִי, וְאֹתָךְ יְחַיּוּ. **יג** אִמְרִי-נָא, אֲחֹתִי אָתְּ--לְמַעַן יִיטַב-לִי בַּעֲבוּרֵךְ, וְחָיְתָה נַפְשִׁי בִּגְלָלֵךְ.
Matriarch Transference	**ח** וַיְהִי, כִּי אָרְכוּ-לוֹ שָׁם הַיָּמִים, וַיִּשְׁקֵף אֲבִימֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ פְּלִשְׁתִּים, בְּעַד הַחַלּוֹן; וַיַּרְא, וְהִנֵּה יִצְחָק מְצַחֵק, אֵת, רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ.	וַיִּשְׁלַח, אֲבִימֶלֶךְ מֶלֶךְ גְּרָר, וַיִּקַּח, אֶת-שָׂרָה.	**יד** וַיְהִי, כְּבוֹא אַבְרָם מִצְרָיְמָה; וַיִּרְאוּ הַמִּצְרִים אֶת-הָאִשָּׁה, כִּי-יָפָה הִוא מְאֹד.

Literary Station	בראשית כו	בראשית כ	בראשית יב
Wealth Acquisition			**טז** וּלְאַבְרָם הֵיטִיב, בַּעֲבוּרָהּ; וַיְהִי-לוֹ צֹאן-וּבָקָר, וַחֲמֹרִים, וַעֲבָדִים וּשְׁפָחֹת, וַאֲתֹנֹת וּגְמַלִּים.
Divine Intervention		**ג** וַיָּבֹא אֱלֹהִים אֶל-אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, בַּחֲלוֹם הַלָּיְלָה; וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ, הִנְּךָ מֵת עַל-הָאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר-לָקַחְתָּ, וְהִוא, בְּעֻלַת בָּעַל. **ד** וַאֲבִימֶלֶךְ, לֹא קָרַב אֵלֶיהָ; וַיֹּאמַר--אֲדֹנָי, הֲגוֹי גַּם-צַדִּיק תַּהֲרֹג. **ה** הֲלֹא הוּא אָמַר-לִי אֲחֹתִי הִוא, וְהִיא-גַם-הִוא אָמְרָה אָחִי הוּא; בְּתֹם-לְבָבִי וּבְנִקְיֹן כַּפַּי, עָשִׂיתִי זֹאת. **ו** וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הָאֱלֹהִים בַּחֲלֹם, גַּם אָנֹכִי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי בְתֹם-לְבָבְךָ עָשִׂיתָ זֹאת, וָאֶחְשֹׂךְ גַּם-אָנֹכִי אוֹתְךָ, מֵחֲטוֹ-לִי; עַל-כֵּן לֹא-נְתַתִּיךָ, לִנְגֹּעַ אֵלֶיהָ. **ז** וְעַתָּה, הָשֵׁב אֵשֶׁת-הָאִישׁ כִּי-נָבִיא הוּא, וְיִתְפַּלֵּל בַּעַדְךָ, וֶחְיֵה; וְאִם-אֵינְךָ מֵשִׁיב--דַּע כִּי-מוֹת תָּמוּת, אַתָּה וְכָל-אֲשֶׁר-לָךְ.	**יז** וַיִּנַּע יְהוָה אֶת-פַּרְעֹה נְגָעִים גְּדֹלִים, וְאֶת-בֵּיתוֹ, עַל-דְּבַר שָׂרַי, אֵשֶׁת אַבְרָם.
Local King's Actions	**יא** וַיְצַו אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, אֶת-כָּל-הָעָם לֵאמֹר: הַנֹּגֵעַ בָּאִישׁ הַזֶּה, וּבְאִשְׁתּוֹ--מוֹת יוּמָת.	**ח** וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אֲבִימֶלֶךְ בַּבֹּקֶר, וַיִּקְרָא לְכָל-עֲבָדָיו, וַיְדַבֵּר אֶת-כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, בְּאָזְנֵיהֶם; וַיִּירְאוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים, מְאֹד.	

Literary Station	בראשית כו	בראשית כ	בראשית יב
King Confronts Abraham (Morality Play)	**ט** וַיִּקְרָא אֲבִימֶלֶךְ לְיִצְחָק, וַיֹּאמֶר אַךְ הִנֵּה אִשְׁתְּךָ הִוא, וְאֵיךְ אָמַרְתָּ, אֲחֹתִי הִוא; וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו, יִצְחָק, כִּי אָמַרְתִּי, פֶּן-אָמוּת עָלֶיהָ. **י** וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, מַה-זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ; כִּמְעַט שָׁכַב אַחַד הָעָם, אֶת-אִשְׁתֶּךָ, וְהֵבֵאתָ עָלֵינוּ, אָשָׁם. **יא** וַיְצַו אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, אֶת-כָּל-הָעָם לֵאמֹר:	**ט** וַיִּקְרָא אֲבִימֶלֶךְ לְאַבְרָהָם, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מֶה-עָשִׂיתָ לָּנוּ וּמֶה-חָטָאתִי לָךְ, כִּי-הֵבֵאתָ עָלַי וְעַל-מַמְלַכְתִּי, חֲטָאָה גְדֹלָה: מַעֲשִׂים אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יֵעָשׂוּ, עָשִׂיתָ עִמָּדִי. **י** וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, אֶל-אַבְרָהָם: מָה רָאִיתָ, כִּי עָשִׂיתָ אֶת-הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה.	**יח** וַיִּקְרָא פַרְעֹה, לְאַבְרָם, וַיֹּאמֶר, מַה-זֹּאת עָשִׂיתָ לִּי; לָמָּה לֹא-הִגַּדְתָּ לִּי, כִּי אִשְׁתְּךָ הִוא. **יט** לָמָּה אָמַרְתָּ אֲחֹתִי הִוא, וָאֶקַּח אֹתָהּ לִי לְאִשָּׁה;
Absolving Patriarch		**יא** וַיֹּאמֶר, אַבְרָהָם, כִּי אָמַרְתִּי רַק אֵין-יִרְאַת אֱלֹהִים, בַּמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה; וַהֲרָגוּנִי, עַל-דְּבַר אִשְׁתִּי. **יב** וְגַם-אָמְנָה, אֲחֹתִי בַת-אָבִי הִוא--אַךְ, לֹא בַת-אִמִּי; וַתְּהִי-לִי, לְאִשָּׁה. **יג** וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר הִתְעוּ אֹתִי, אֱלֹהִים מִבֵּית אָבִי, וָאֹמַר לָהּ, זֶה חַסְדֵּךְ אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשִׂי עִמָּדִי: אֶל כָּל-הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר נָבוֹא שָׁמָּה, אִמְרִי-לִי אָחִי הוּא.	
[Displaced] Wealth Acquisition	**יב** וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק בָּאָרֶץ הַהִוא, וַיִּמְצָא בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִוא מֵאָה שְׁעָרִים; וַיְבָרְכֵהוּ, יְהוָה. **יג** וַיִּגְדַּל, הָאִישׁ; וַיֵּלֶךְ הָלוֹךְ וְגָד�ֵל, עַד כִּי-גָדַל מְאֹד. **יד** וַיְהִי-לוֹ מִקְנֵה-צֹאן וּמִקְנֵה בָקָר, וַעֲבֻדָּה רַבָּה; וַיְקַנְאוּ אֹתוֹ, פְּלִשְׁתִּים.	**יד** וַיִּקַּח אֲבִימֶלֶךְ צֹאן וּבָקָר, וַעֲבָדִים וּשְׁפָחֹת, וַיִּתֵּן, לְאַבְרָהָם; וַיָּשֶׁב לוֹ, אֵת שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ. **טו**וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, הִנֵּה אַרְצִי לְפָנֶיךָ: בַּטּוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ, שֵׁב. **טז** וּלְשָׂרָה אָמַר, הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי אֶלֶף כֶּסֶף לְאָחִיךְ--הִנֵּה הוּא-לָךְ כְּסוּת עֵינַיִם, לְכֹל אֲשֶׁר אִתָּךְ; וְאֵת כֹּל, וְנֹכָחַת.	
Resolution	**טו** וְכָל-הַבְּאֵרֹת, אֲשֶׁר חָפְרוּ עַבְדֵי אָבִיו, בִּימֵי, אַבְרָהָם אָבִיו--סִתְּמוּם פְּלִשְׁתִּים, וַיְמַלְאוּם עָפָר. **טז** וַיֹּאמֶר אֲבִימֶלֶךְ, אֶל-יִצְחָק: לֵךְ, מֵעִמָּנוּ, כִּי-עָצַמְתָּ מִמֶּנּוּ, מְאֹד.	וְעַתָּה, הִנֵּה אִשְׁתְּךָ קַח וָלֵךְ. **כ** וַיְצַו עָלָיו פַּרְעֹה, אֲנָשִׁים; וַיְשַׁלְּחוּ אֹתוֹ וְאֶת-אִשְׁתּוֹ, וְאֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ.

Appendix B—Adom haAdom

This is a lentil soup worth a birthright blessing. Grab a big pot and get ready to enjoy a mess of pottage that would have satisfied even Esau's ravenous hunger.

Ingredients:
1 medium onion, chopped
3 cloves of garlic, minced
1 tbsp tomato paste
1.25 tsp ground cumin
0.25 tsp black pepper
0.25 kosher salt
pinch of cayenne pepper
1 quart chicken broth (homemade or low sodium preferred)
2 cups water
1 cup red lentils, rinsed and picked over
1 large carrot, peeled and diced
Juice of 0.5 lemon, more to taste

Preparation:
In a large pot or dutch oven, pour a splash of the chicken broth on medium high heat; add onion and garlic, and cook until golden (about 5-6 minutes). Alternatively, preheat olive oil in lieu of the chicken broth, and cook the onions and garlic in that. If cooking with the chicken broth, keep an eye on the onions and garlic; if the pot gets too dry, add another splash of broth to keep things moving.

Stir in the tomato paste, cumin, salt, black pepper, and cayenne, and let the flavors meld together (about 3-4 minutes).

Add the lentils and carrots, and let everything toast together for a minute before adding the liquid. Pour in the broth and water, and bring to a simmer. Once simmering, partially cover the pot, and reduce the heat to medium low. Cook until the lentils are soft, between 30-40 minutes. Add salt to taste.

If desired, using an immersion blender, puree about halfway to thicken the soup.

Serve in bowls with lemon juice to brighten the flavors.

Appendix C: Deep Dish Paradise Pie[110]

This apple pie may not use a biblical *tapuach* as its base, but it sure is scrumptious. If we had to leave Eden, at least we have access to pies like this one.[111]

Ingredients:
For the crust:
1.5 cups vegetable shortening (or, for a flakier crust, half shortening and half butter)
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 egg, beaten
1 tbsp white vinegar
5 tbsp cold water (if using ice water, be careful to drain the ice before adding to the mixture)
1.5 tsp kosher salt

For the filling:
6 large Granny Smith Apples (peel and core each apple, then cut into quarters, and slice each quarter into about 4-6 slices)
1 cup light brown sugar
.75 cup white sugar
2 tbsp all-purpose flour
4 tsp real vanilla extract
.5 tsp cinnamon
2 cups heavy cream

For the topping:
1.5 sticks of butter
1.5 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup light brown sugar
.5 cups pecans
sprinkle of salt

Preparation:
Dough: In a large bowl, use a pastry cutter to work the shortening into the flour until it forms a coarse meal. Pour in the egg, and add the water, vinegar, and salt. Stir together until all the ingredients are combined. If needed, add another tbsp of the cold water to bring everything together. [Note: the crust can also be prepared in a food processor. If using this option, pulse everything together, being careful not to overwork the dough.] If

[110] Adapted from The Pioneer Woman's Dreamy Apple Pie

[111] This recipe makes one deep dish 9x13 pie, or can be made in a traditional pie form (in which case, use half of the pie dough and cut the filling recipe in half). The deep dish version serves 10-12 if everyone shows up on time. Otherwise, it serves whoever gets there first.

making one deep dish pie, put the entire dough mixture into a zip-top bag and store in the refrigerator until ready to assemble. If making a traditional pie, cut the dough in half and store accordingly; you'll only need one half of the prepared dough.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Filling: put the apple slices in a large mixing bowl. Separately, mix cream, brown sugar, sugar, flour, vanilla, and cinnamon, and mix until well-combined and no longer clumpy. Pour this liquid mixture over the apples, and combine until each apple slice is coated. You could stop here, because the mixture is incredibly delicious. Or, read on.

Roll out the pie dough and fit it to the form of the dish you're using. If using a 9x13 dish, make sure to get the dough flush with the corners. Pour the apple mixture into the pie shell.

Topping: In a food processor (or you can mix by hand) combine the butter, remaining flour, sugar, and pecans (chop these if mixing by hand). Add a sprinkle of salt, make sure everything is combined. Pour this topping over the apples.

Because your dish is probably very full, bake the dish on top of a rimmed cookie sheet to avoid a messy bubble-over. Cover the top of the pie with aluminum foil.

Bake for 1 hour, then remove foil and bake for 30 additional minutes, or until the top is brown and bubbly.

Serve with whipped cream, or, if you're feeling indulgent, with a scoop of salted caramel ice cream.