BIBLICAL STUDIES RESOURCE PROJECT FOR EXEGESIS OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE: Part 2
Torah – Winter 2017 – Dr. Sara Koenig

Because Part 1 of the project aimed to get you very familiar with the text of your passage, Part 2 attempts to widen your lens by asking you to consider the broader literary context (e.g. how does your passage fit in the rest of the OT and NT), and also to begin to look at how other interpreters have explained the text. You still do not need to do synthesis; that will happen in Part 3. But please include a bibliography that uses SBL Style (see the style guide linked on Canvas): for this assignment, approximately 10% of the grade will include formatting.

1. YOUR TEXT IN CONTEXT
   • Since you have already looked very closely at your particular passage, widen the focus and explain how your text fits in the larger context of the biblical book, and the Pentateuch as a whole. Where are we in the story of Israel? What has preceded your text, and what follows it?
     o First, look at the context on your own. Then, read the article on your book (e.g. Genesis, Numbers, Deuteronomy) in the Anchor Bible Dictionary OR The New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible, taking notes as you read. (These are available in the reference section of the library: BS440) ABD, in particular, will give outlines of the book.
   • Widen your lens more, and identify other places in the Old Testament that connect with your text. (For example, 2nd Isaiah talks a lot about the Exodus; the Psalms often refer to creation). Don’t just identify the other text, but explain how it talks about your passage.
   • Keep expanding your look and identify any New Testament passages that directly quote, or allude to, your text. It will be easier to find direct quotes; allusions may be—obviously—a bit more allusive. A couple of resources might help you:
   If you do not find any NT passages that draw on your text, note that, too. After you identify their location (e.g. 2 Peter 2:15-16 refers to Balaam), assess the NT use of your text. Do the NT authors pay attention to context, or do they seem to be “proof-texting”? This work should produce at least three substantial paragraphs.

2. A (BRIEF) HISTORY OF JEWISH AND ANCIENT CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION
   • Everyone will look at their text in the following three sources:
     1. Midrash Rabbah BMS17.M6 E54 1983
     2. The Talmud: BM499.5. E5 1965
     3. The IVP Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: REF BS1225.3 .E96
   • Those of you who have texts from Exodus and Leviticus will look at your text in the JPS Miqra’ot Gedalot (“the great reading”, in addition to the Talmud and Midrash Rabbah): BS1223 .C37 2005
   • A couple of practical things to keep in mind:
     1. Finding things in the Talmud can be challenging. If you missed Steve Perisho’s explanation, ask a friend, or ask me. (You can, however, search the Talmud by word, or by character (e.g. Rebekah.).)
     2. The IVP Ancient Christian Commentary is in the Reference section (as well as in the commentary section on the 2nd floor of the library) but the others will be on the shelves: i.e. do not check them out! Please be considerate of your classmates’ need to look at the same books as you! REF BS1151.2 .A53 2001.
• Summarize your findings, and then interact with them. With what other texts do the rabbis connect your text? How do the Ancient Christian Commentators talk about your pericope – as foreshadowing of Christ? As allegory? What have you learned about your text by reading what interpreters from long ago had to say about it? Where do you disagree with them? What questions do you have? Six to eight pages.¹

3. ATLASES
• This step may not apply for every text. However, if your pericope includes any geographical references, look up the areas in one of the atlases below.
• In one to two paragraphs, describe the geographical location and its potential interpretive significance.

4. Include a bibliography of the sources you used.

¹ One way to organize this is verse-by-verse, and then catalogue Talmud, Midrash and Christians under that.