

ACABS 291: Canaanites within and without the Bible, Winter 2009

Instructor: Eric Reymond

Office: 3155 Thayer Building; Office Hours: Mon./Wed. 3:30-5:00; Email: ereymond@umich.edu

Debased idol-worshippers or simply the inhabitants of the ancient Middle East? A corrupting influence on the biblical patriarchs or the originators of biblical traditions? This course explores this often-maligned group, the Canaanites, who figure in the Bible as well as in other Ancient Near Eastern literature from the so-called “Patriarchal Age” and after. The course attempts to trace the history and culture of the Canaanites by reading ancient texts (in translation) that can be with some plausibility attributed to them, as well as ancient texts that are about them, especially the biblical text. In addition, the course will trace the manner that the Canaanites have been portrayed throughout history in secondary sources, including in recent historical surveys and histories of the “Bible Lands.”

Each class will include a lecture followed by a discussion of pertinent texts.

THERE ARE NO LANGUAGE PREREQUISITES FOR THE COURSE.

Student evaluation will be made based on class attendance/participation, 3 written assignments of 3-4 pages each; on a midterm, and a final exam.

We will use, as our textbook, Jonathan N. Tubb, *Canaanites* (Peoples of the Past; Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1999), first published London: British Museum, 1998.

Students should also have access to a Bible, specifically a NRSV or JPS translation.

Other material will be covered by handouts distributed once classes begin.

1) Th. Jan. 8: Hellos, Preliminaries

2) Tu. Jan 13: Introduction to the Canaanites

3) Th. Jan. 15: Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Early Bronze

4) Tu. Jan 20: Middle Bronze Age

5) Th. Jan. 22: Middle Bronze Age (Hyksos)

6) Tu. Jan. 27: Middle / Late Bronze Age

7) Th. Jan. 29: Late Bronze Age

8) Tu. Feb. 3: Late Bronze (Amarna)

9) Th. Feb. 5: Late Bronze (Amarna)

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10) Tu. Feb. 10: LB (Ugarit, intro)

11) Th. Feb. 12: LB (Ugarit, religion: Baal)

12) Tu. Feb. 17: LB (Ugarit, religion: Baal)

13) Th. Feb. 19: LB (Ugarit, epic: Kirta/Aqhat)

Tu.-Th. Feb. 24-26: BREAK

14) Tu. Mar. 3: Prep and catch-up

15) Th. Mar. 5: **Midterm**

16) Tu. Mar. 10: LB (Ugarit, ritual, science)

17) Th. Mar. 12: LB/Iron Age (alphabet)

18) Tu. Mar. 17: LB/IA, society: gender, sex

19) Th. Mar. 19: LB/IA, society: gender,

sex

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20) Tu. Mar. 24: IA: disintegration of LB

21) Th. Mar. 26: IA: disintegration of LB

22) Tu. Mar. 31: IA, religion Can. vs. Israel.

23) Th. Apr. 2: IA, religion Can. vs.

Israelite

24) Tu. Apr. 7: Iron Age: Phoenicians

25) Th. Apr. 9: Iron Age: Phoenicians

26) Tu. Apr. 14: Persian Era: Phoenicians

27) Th. Apr. 16: Persian Era and after

28) Tu. Apr. 21: Coda / Final preparation

Goals of Course

Students should expect to come away from the course knowing:

1. How the label “Canaanite” and “Canaan” was applied in antiquity and what the labels refer to.
2. The cultural characteristics of the Canaanites (including aspects of their religion, literature, art, and architecture) in the Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, and Persian Era.
3. The relationship between Israelite and Canaanite religious expression.
4. How and why the Israelites are considered by scholars to be an outgrowth of Canaanite culture and society.
5. The political history of Canaanites in the LB Age, Iron Age, and Persian Era.

Helpful Resources and Their Abbreviations

ABD = D.N. Freedman (ed.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992). In Hat. Ref. room.

ANET = James B. Pritchard (ed.), *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (3rd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University, 1969). In reference area of Shapiro.

BNP = Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (eds.), *Brill's New Pauly: Encyclopedia of the Ancient World: Antiquity* (multiple volumes, not yet complete; Leiden: Brill, 2002--). This is a translation of NP and is found in Hat. Ref. room.

CANE = Jack M. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (4 vols.; New York: Scribner, 1995). In Hat. Ref. Rm.

COS = William W. Hallo (ed.), *Context of Scripture* (3 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1997-2002).

KAI = H. Donner and W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften* (3 vols., Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2002 [vol. 1], 1968 [vol. 2], 1969 [vol. 3]).

Licht = Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature* (3 vols.; Berkeley: University of California, 1976).

NEAE = E. Stern (ed.), *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Carta, 1993). In Hat. Ref. room.

NP = Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider (eds.), *Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike* (16 vols.; Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996). In Hat. Ref. room.

OCD = Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford University, 1996). In Hat. Ref. room.

OEAE = Donald B. Redford (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Oxford University, 2001).

OEANE = Eric M. Meyers (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology of the Near East* (5 vols.; New York: Oxford University, 1997). In Hat. Ref. room.

Tubb = Jonathan N. Tubb, *Canaanites* (Peoples of the Past; Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1999), first published London: British Museum, 1998.

Other Works of Interest for Ancient Israel and Canaan

Amnon Ben-Tor, *Archaeology of Ancient Israel* (New Haven: Yale University, 1992).

Israel Finkelstein and Neil A. Silberman, *David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* (New York: Free Press, 2007).

Israel Finkelstein, Amihai Mazar, and Brian B. Schmidt, *The Quest for the Historical Israel: Debating Archaeology and the History of Early Israel* (SBLABS; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007).

- Lester L. Grabbe, *Ancient Israel: What Do We Know and How Do We Know it?* (London: T&T Clark, 2007).
- Ann E. Killebrew, *Biblical Peoples and Ethnicity: An Archaeological Study of Egyptians, Canaanites, Philistines, and Early Israel 1300-1100 B.C.E.* (SBLABS 9; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005).
- Amihai Mazar, *Archaeology of the land of the Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).
- James M. Miller and John H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (2nd ed.; Louisville, Kent.: Westminster/John Knox, 2006).
- Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley, *The Sacred Bridge: Carta's Atlas of the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2005).
- Mark S. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans; 2002).
- , *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003).

Week 1:

Th. Jan. 8: Hellos, Preliminaries

Week 2:

Tu. Jan 13: Introduction to the Canaanites

Readings: Genesis 10

Numbers 34:1-12

Questions:

1. Based on what you knew before signing up for the course, what would you say a Canaanite is?
2. Consider how you use ethnic/geographic labels about yourself. When and where do you describe yourself from a given country, state, or city?

Th. Jan. 15: Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Early Bronze

Readings: Tubb, 9-54

Question:

1. What makes using the Bible and its accounts of the Canaanites problematic for historical purposes?

Terms: Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Early Bronze

Week 3:

Tu. Jan 20: Middle Bronze Age

Readings: Tubb 55-67

Sinuhe (from Licht 1.222-235) **Bring to class!**

Book of Genesis, chapters 12-15 **Bring to class!**

Question:

- *1. What do we learn about the Levant from the story of Sinuhe (or, at least, Egypt's view of the Levant)? How do the "Asiatics" live? What do they think of Egypt and the Egyptians? Where does Sinuhe go? What aspects of the economy and society represented in Sinuhe seem parallel to those represented in the book of Genesis?

Terms: Middle Bronze Age, Sinuhe, *midol*

Th. Jan. 22: Middle Bronze Age

Readings: Hyksos in Egypt (from ANET)

War against the Hyksos (ANET)

Execration of Asiatic Princes (ANET)

Egyptians and Gods of Asia (ANET) **Bring to class!**

Questions:

1. What is the Egyptian attitude to Asiatics after the Hyksos? How does this differ from the attitude of Egyptians represented in Sinuhe? What influence do “Asiatic” gods have in Egypt and on the Egyptians?
2. What do the Hyksos have to do with the Canaanites and/or the Israelites?

Terms: Hyksos, Seth

Week 4:

Tu. Jan. 27: Middle / Late Bronze Age

Readings: Tubb 70-94;

Genesis 9, 24, 34, 38 **Bring to class!**

Questions:

*1. What is the portrait of the Canaanites offered by these chapters from Genesis?

*2. What is the greatest threat posed by these Canaanites?

Terms: Lachish, Ugarit, Amarna

Th. Jan. 29: Late Bronze Age

Readings: Autobiography of Ahmose (Licht 2.12-18)

Stele of Idrimi (ANET) **Bring to class!**

Taking of Joppa (ANET)

Annals of Thutmose III, Battle of Megiddo (Licht 2.29-35)

Kadesh Battle Inscription of Rameses II (Licht 2.57-72)

Questions:

1. How are the Canaanites depicted in the Idrimi stele?

2. In the Kadesh Battle Inscription of Rameses II, the Canaanites include the “Shosu” who are captured (p. 60) and the “chiefs of the lands of Pharaoh.” How are these Canaanites portrayed and where is their allegiance? In this inscription, note also to whom Rameses likens himself (on pages 62, 64, 67).

Terms: Idrimi, Megiddo, Kadesh

Week 5:

Tu. Feb. 3: Late Bronze Age: Amarna age

Readings: Amarna tablets: #60-64 (from Abdi-Ashirta, king of Amurru), #68, 71, 73-77, 81, 83, 89, 114, 117, 119, 136, 137 (from Rib-Hadda, king of Byblos [aka Gubla]),

Questions:

*1. What might be the strategy of Amurru’s leaders (Abdi-Ashirta and Aziru) during this time period?

*2. What might be the strategy of Byblos? of Egypt?

*3. From these letters, who are the ‘Apiru and do they seem similar to the early Israelites?

4. How does the rhetoric of Rib-Hadda change from the earlier letters (like # 74) to the later letters (like #83)?

Terms: Amurru, Abdi-Ashirta, Rib-Haddu (Rib-Addi), ‘Apiru

Th. Feb. 5: Late Bronze Age: Amarna age

Readings: Amarna tablets: #8-9 (from Burra-Buriyash, king of Mitanni), 244, 245, 246 (from Biridiya, ruler of Megiddo), 253, 254 (from Lab’ayu, ruler of Shechem), 280 (from Shuwardata, ruler of Qiltu), 286-290 (from ‘Abdi-Heba, ruler of Jerusalem).

Optional Reading:

Trevor Bryce "Chapter 9: Warlords of Amurru," in *Letters of the Great Kings of the Ancient Near East: The Royal Correspondence of the Late Bronze Age* (London: Routledge, 2003), 145-168.

Questions:

1. Compare #s 8-9 with the other letters. What formalities do you detect in the Amarna correspondence? When do you refer to someone as the "Sun" or to a "brother"? Which letters wish health on the recipients?
2. What similarities exist between Abdi-Ashirta and Lab'ayu?
3. Is Abdi-Heba more like Abdi-Ashirta or more like Rib-Hadda?

Terms: Lab'ayu

Week 6:

Tu. Feb. 10: Late Bronze Age: Ugarit and its culture

Readings: W. H. Van Soldt's article "Ugarit" in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (N.Y.: Scribner, 1995), 1255-1266

Questions:

1. What is one thing you found strange or unexpected about the city and history of Ugarit?

Terms: Baal, Yam, Mot, El, Athirat, and Anat

Th. Feb. 12: Late Bronze Age: Ugarit, religion, myths

Readings:

"Smith, Baal Cycle from UNP, intro" **BRING TO CLASS!**

"Smith, Baal Cycle from UNP, Baal and the Sea (Yamm)" **BRING TO CLASS!**

From: Mark Smith, "The Baal Cycle," from *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997)

Questions:

- *1. Be a "Canaanite" theologian and explain the "meaning" of the battle between Baal and Yam to your "flock." What is the meaning behind the conflict? Can you explain the message of the Ugaritic poem? Although the sea is defeated, it is not eliminated. What is the significance of this?
- *2. What are the different ways a farmer, a scribe, a priest, a king might read this poem?
- *3 What similarities or parallels do you notice with the Hebrew Bible, and the way Yahweh is described there? (**Hint: read first:** Psalm 89:9-11, 25; Psalm 77:16-20; Isa 51:9-11; Psalm 114:1-5)

Terms: Leviathan

Week 7:

Tu. Feb. 17: Late Bronze Age: Ugarit, religion, myths (Smith, Baal texts)

Readings:

"Smith, Baal Cycle from UNP, Baal and His Palace" **BRING TO CLASS!**

"Smith, Baal Cycle from UNP, Baal and Death (Mot)" **BRING TO CLASS!**

From: Mark Smith, "The Baal Cycle," from *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, ed. Simon B. Parker (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997)

Questions:

- *1. Be a "Canaanite" theologian and explain the "meaning" of the battle between Baal and Mot to your "flock" as well as the entire cycle of poems. What is the meaning behind the conflict? Can you explain the message of the Ugaritic poem?
- *2. What are the different ways a farmer, a scribe, a priest, a king might read this poem?
- *3 What similarities or parallels do you notice with the Hebrew Bible, and the way Yahweh is described there? (**Hint: read first:** Isa. 27:1, Ps 74:13-14, Ps 68:4)

Terms: Yarikh

Th. Feb. 19: Late Bronze Age: Ugarit, religion, myths

Readings:

“Pardee, Dawn and Dusk” from COS 1

“Pardee, Ugaritic Prayer for a City Under Siege,” from COS 1

“Pardee, Ilu on a Toot,” from COS 1

Questions:

1. What is the Ugaritian view of sex? Of heavy-drinking? How did the religion intersect with or incorporate these things?
2. What is revealed in the Ugaritic prayer about the relationship between humans and gods and their expectations?

Week 8: NO CLASS

Week 9: catch-up/prep; midterm

Tu. Mar. 3: Prep and catch-up

Th. Mar. 5: Midterm

Week 10:

Tu. Mar. 10: Late Bronze Age: Ugarit religion

Readings:

“Coogan, Kirta” **BRING TO CLASS!**

Questions:

- *1. What are humans supposed to do for the gods? What are the gods supposed to do for humans? How do these relationships differ from those represented in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament? Consider, for example, Abraham and Yahweh.
- *2. What does the story reveal about the relationships between kings and their children in this society/culture?
- *3. Would you say these works qualify as “classic” works of literature? If not, what do these poems lack that others (like Homer’s Iliad, or Odyssey or the Bible) have? If they do qualify, what do they share with the Iliad, Odyssey, the Bible?

Terms: Kirta

Th. Mar. 12: Late Bronze Age: Ugarit religion

Readings:

“Coogan, Aqhat” **BRING TO CLASS!**

Questions:

- *1. What is expected of humanity, vis-à-vis the gods? What do humans expect from the gods? How does this relationship between god and human differ from that in Kirta?
- *2. What does this story reveal about the relationship between father and son?
- *3. What does this story reveal about how the Ugaritians viewed death and the power of the gods? How is this similar to the perspective of the writers of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament? Consider Job. According to the Ugaritic religion, where does “evil” come from?

Terms: Aqhat, Daniel, Pughatu

Week 11:

Tu. Mar. 17: Late Bronze Age: Canaanite society (magic, gender, patriarchy)

Readings:

“Pardee, Ugaritic Birth Omens,” from COS 1

“Pardee, Ugaritic Lunar Omens,” from COS 1

“Fleming, Ugaritic Incantation against Sorcery,” from COS 1

“Marcus, The Betrothal of Yarikh and Nikkal-Ib,” from UNP

Questions:

1. What aspects of the Ugaritic religious practice surprise you or confirm what you already believed about “pagan” religion?
2. Based on the last text in the list, as well as on the other myths and stories we have read, what is the general position of women in Ugaritic society?
3. How was marriage viewed?

Th. Mar. 19: Late Bronze Age: Science, ritual, the alphabet

Readings: David Sacks, *Letter Perfect: The Marvelous History of Our Alphabet from A to Z* (New York: Broadway, 2003), 1-42. Listed in CTOOLS as “Sacks, LetterPerfect”.

Questions:

1. Who invented the alphabet? And, where?
2. And, what is its significance?

Note: In the Bible, the people of Canaan are given various names, including Amorites, Hivites, Perizzites, as well as Canaanites.

Week 12:

Tu. Mar. 24: Disintegration of Late Bronze kingdoms, emergence of Iron Age Kingdoms

Readings:

Tubb, 95-115

Report of Wenamun, from COS, listed as “Licht, Wenamun, in COS” on CTOOLS

Questions:

- *1. What does the story of Wenamun tell us of the Levant during the early Iron Age?
- *2. How does this portrait differ from the portrait offered by Sinuhe?

Terms: Wenamun, Sea Peoples - Philistines

Th. Mar. 26: Disintegration of Late Bronze kingdoms, emergence of Iron Age Kingdoms

Readings:

Numbers 13-14; 21-25

Deir Alla Plaster Inscriptions, in COS 2, 140-145, trans. B. Levine.

Questions:

- *1. How are the Canaanites and the people inhabiting Canaan described in Num 13 and 14 and what connection do they have to the Rephaim of the Bible?
- *2. What role does Balaam serve in the narrative of Numbers 21-25? Assuming that the stories about him are fictionalized, what purpose does he serve in the narrative about Moses, the Israelites, and God?
- *3. What is the connection between the Balaam of the Bible and the Balaam of the Deir Alla texts?
- *4. What parallels exist between the Deir Alla texts and the Ugaritic literature we have read?

Terms: Balaam, Deir Alla

Week 13:

Tu. Mar. 31: Iron Age: Israelites vs. Canaanites

Readings:

Deut 7:1-5; Deut 9:1-12; and Deut 20:16-18

Book of Joshua

Questions:

- *1. How do the Israelites, in the book of Joshua, fulfill what is required of them in Deuteronomy, in relation to the Canaanites? How do they fall short? What exceptions are made?
- *2. Why are the Canaanites portrayed in the ways that they are? Assuming that the stories in Joshua are largely fictionalized, what is the significance of Rahab being spared? What does it say about the Israelites and about the Canaanites?
- *3. What is the relevance of the story about the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh building an altar in chapter 22?

Terms: Rahab (Rachab) of Jericho

Th. Apr. 2: Iron Age: Israelite religion vs. Canaanite religion

Readings:

Judges

Questions:

- *1. What aspects of life represented in the Wenamun tale are similar to the life represented in the Book of Judges?
- *2. How is the worship of Baal portrayed in this book?
- *3. What is the role of women in this book? What roles do women play in the various stories?

Terms: Jael - Sisera, Jephthah, Gideon

Week 14:

Tu. Apr. 7: Iron Age: Israelite History

Readings:

Tubb, 116-127

1Sam 15-31

Questions:

- *1. What aspects of the story of David's rise to power remind you of the narratives of Idrimi, Kirta, Aqhat?
- *2. What aspects of David's life (as represented in 1Sam 15-31) remind us of Abdi-Ashirta of Amurru's?

Terms: David

Th. Apr. 9: Iron Age: Phoenicians

Readings:

2Samuel 5:10-12

1Kings 5, 9:26-28, 16:23-34 (Ethbaal I is King of "Sidonians" that is "Phoenicians"; he is King of Tyre), chaps. 17-21

2Kings 9-10

Psalm 45

Isaiah 23

Ezekiel 26-28

Questions:

- *1. How do the passages from 2Samuel, 1-2Kings, and Psalm 45 characterize, in general ways, the Phoenicians?
- *2. What inconsistencies seem most striking?
- *3. What problems are involved in depending on the biblical text for information on the ancient past?
- *4. What do the passages from Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 26-28 reveal about Tyre and its image in the ancient imagination?

Terms: Ahab, Hiram, Jezebel, Tyre, Phoenician

Week 15:

Tu. Apr. 14: Persian Era: Phoenicians

Readings:

Jidejian, *Sidon through the Ages*, 43-63. (This is the fifth chapter; listed as such on CTOOLS.)

Inscription of King Yehawmilk (COS 2.32)---listed under "Yehawmilk inscription" in CTOOLS

The Sarcophagus Inscription of Tabnit, King of Sidon (COS 2.56)—listed under "Tabnit and Eshmunazar"

The Sarcophagus Inscription of 'Eshmun'azor, King of Sidon (COS 2.57)

Questions:

1. How do the Phoenicians fare under the Persians? What is the status of Tyre vis-à-vis Sidon?

2. What do the inscriptions from Byblos and Sidon reveal to us about the religion and rulership of these two cities during the Persian era?

Terms: Sidon, Eshmunazar

Th. Apr. 16: Persian Era and after

Readings:

Tubb 128-146

Serge Lancel, *Carthage: A History* (trans. Antonia Nevill; Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 35-109.

--listed under "Lancel, Carthage, pp. 35ff."

and "Lancel, Carthage, pp. 78ff."

Questions:

*1. What aspects of Canaanite culture survive in the Phoenician colonies, especially Carthage?

*2. How is the negative image of the Canaanites in the Bible paralleled by a negative image of the Carthaginians and Phoenicians in classical sources?

Terms: Carthage, Hannibal, Punic

Week 16:

Tu. Apr. 21: Final preparation