Ancient Western Literature Mid-Term Examination Study Guide

1. Gaster says, "It is possible that in its original form this story of Baal designed for an autumnal festival which marked the return of the rainy season and the beginning of the autumnal year. That festival would have been a Canaanite forerunner to the Hebrew Feast of Ingathering, still observed by the Jews as the Feast of Booths." What is Gaster implying? Respond to this using Scripture

- In Exodus 19:25 Moses descends from Mount Sinai where he just met with God for a period of three days where God gives Moses the Ten Commandments and instructions for how the people ought to live. As a part of these instructions for the Israelites they are called to celebrate to the Lord with three feasts throughout the year. In Exodus 23 they are told to celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops and the Feast of Ingathering when they take in the rest of the crops. This meeting with God was just three months after the Israelites left Egypt and it was still 40 years at the least before the Canaanites and the Israelites would come into contact with one another.
2. *In the myth, Snaring of the Dragon Inaras imparts some of her godhead to Hupasiyas.*

*She later regrets her action. Why? Gaster sees this myth paralleled in what Scripture passage? How would you interpret that Scripture?*

- Inaras regrets her decision to impart her godhead to Hupasiyas because she doesn’t want Hupasiyas to go and have children or have sex with his wife which would make them also part of the godhead. If more gods are created then she loses her power over the mortals.

- Gaster sees the myth paralleled in Genesis 6. However he misinterpreted the Scripture. God did say that His Spirit would not contend with mans forever, and he said that at the moment in which the sons of God were consorting with the daughters of men. However God wanted to destroy mankind because every thought they has was inclined upon evil. But Gaster thought it was because the “sons of God” who he believed to be actual Gods were having relations with “daughters of men” or mortals. Gaster is wrong in his assumptions though. See the term “sons of God” refers to the creation where man was made in the glory of God, and woman was made in the glory of man, that is where the terms derive their meaning. Thus this story does not at all line up with the story of Snaring of the Dragon, and once again Gaster is wrong.
3. Gaster says, "When Ashtar is named to succeed the ousted Baal, he fails to qualify because he is physically too small to occupy the latter's throne...There is subtle point in this, for among ancient and primitive peoples a primary requisite for kingship is that the person who aspires to it must be taller than everyone else." **Whom does he cite as an example? Why is this invalid? What else is flawed in his argument?**

- Gaster cites 1 Samuel 16:7 as an example for this statement. He uses the Israelite nation as an example that they only appointed men of great stature to the position of King, he said this was true for King Saul and then pointed to 1 Samuel 16:7 to prove this to be true. However in 1 Samuel 16:7 the story is centered on appointing a man to replace Saul as King of Israel. Within this story Samuel is looking at the sons of Jesse for the next king and God tells Samuel that God does not look at the appearance of man, but God looks at the heart. God chose David to be king, and David was the youngest son, a mere shepherd boy, oh and he was also the smallest in stature of all the other sons. Plus almost all the Kings of Israel were small in stature.

4. Gaster says, "...red is frequently used by primitive peoples as a means of forfending demons." He then goes on to cite Israel as an example. **What does he use, and why is his example invalid?**

- When Gaster uses sacrificing a red heifer and the use of its blood in Numbers 19:2 as an example of forfending demons he is completely inaccurate because demons were not at all a part of the reasoning for the process. The whole ritual was intended to be used for the cleansing of the sin of the Israelite nation, not to ward off demons.
5. What were the parallels between the Zoser story and the Joseph account? What are the possible explanations for these similarities? Which do you believe and why (be certain to discuss the dating of the stories)?

- There were several similarities between the stories like a seven year famine, a dream had by the Pharaoh, a tithe of the crops, and an administrator that portions out the food stores. I believe in the Joseph account because the timeline with the Zoser account uses a lot of assumptions in their dating and in the stories reliability. The story is written to have occurred in 2650 BC but it was actually written down in 200 BC, the Joseph story on the other hand was written in 1250 BC and said that it occurred in 1800 BC, thus making it a more reliable story. I believe that the reasons that similarities exist within the two texts is the fact that they are telling the same story but one story is told from an extreme bias. The Egyptians in the story of Zoser are really talking about Joseph, but they don’t want to bring him up by that name because that would recall memories of the Hebrew people and how they completely embarrassed the entire nation when they took all of Egypt’s possessions and then destroyed the entirety of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, it was a defeat that Egypt wanted to forget and thus they leave key parts of the story out.
6. *From the Epic of Gilgamesh* we discover the characteristics of friendship. *What are its advantages and disadvantages? Use the text to illustrate.*

   - Friendships are great because a friend can hold you accountable, a friend can build you up when your down, they can help you to become a better person, a friend can teach you things that you never knew before, a friend is someone that you can lean on. However there are disadvantages that come with friendship, like a friends ability to pass on their less desirable traits on to the other friend, or the fact that sometimes one friend isn’t strong enough to pick up the other one and so the result is that both friends will end up falling. With the Epic of Gilgamesh we see both of these played out. Gilgamesh and Enkidu were able to build each other up and encourage each other on to do great things, things they weren’t able to do without the other. However when Enkidu was killed Gilgamesh fell into a pit of despair and both ended up fading from life. Gilgamesh was altogether too dependent upon his friend Enkidu, this shows a difficulty of friendship because at times we are too reliant upon friends rather than being self-reliant.

7. *How do you reconcile similarities between the Genesis flood account and that from Epic of Gilgamesh?*

   - If there was a flood of the proportions that the Bible accounts for then everyone would pass on the legend of what it was that they saw. In the Epic of Gilgamesh they try to explain things through their Gods using the flood as an example, with the Bible it does much of the same thing however there is one difference that exists between the two. The Bible is the more reliable of the two accounts and it is the truth that we stand behind because we can examine other parts of the Genesis
account and find the truth through their evidence. Because the other parts of the
Genesis accounts are correct the n we can group the Flood account in as the truth.

8. How does the pursuit for eternal life found in Epic of Gilgamesh show the frailty of
man’s capacities?

- The Epic of Gilgamesh displays an overriding truth that can be displayed
throughout the souls of all mankind. Eternity is something that has placed deep
within our souls and it is something that we long and strive for. But within the
Epic of Gilgamesh we also see that living for eternity is absolutely pointless if
you don’t have someone to live for. Man is a passionate being, and if he doesn’t
have something to be passionate about then his life is absolutely pointless.

9. What characteristics of Epic of Gilgamesh qualify it to be classified as an epic?

- The Epic of Gilgamesh is in fact an epic based on the nature of how it is written.
The Epic of Gilgamesh is a poem, which means that within the poem are a great
deal of mnemonic devices and there is a lot of repetition throughout the story.
Also throughout the entirety of the story the dynamic of saving mankind and
finding a way to beat mortality is reinforced. Another characteristic that screams
that this is an epic, is the fact that Gilgamesh himself is two parts god one part
man, thus he is as the modern world would most definitely declare, “epic”.

10. Recite the tale of how Osiris becomes the god of the dead and Horus becomes the god of
the living.

- READ THE STORY
11. *What is the great danger in dabbling in the art of magic?*

- The danger that comes with the dabbling in the art of magic is in the fact that belief in magic and the powers that supposedly are connected with magic grant power and authority in your life to something that is not God. By fearing magic or even believing that magic is real we enable the devil to have a foothold in our lives and take away from the authority of God, which is absolute.

12. *How does The War of the Gods aid us in understanding the people to whom it belongs, especially as regards their relationship to the gods?*

- The story of The War of the Gods reveals to us a lot about the Babylonian people and about people in general. First the story tries to explain the mysteries of the Earth and its creation for the Babylonians. The story also exemplifies that people have a spiritual need created within them for a god of some sort. By having gods man is given a purpose in life, to serve the gods. By serving the gods man feels like they have the ability to control acts of nature due to their belonging to a very detailed system. Over time though men began to create false gods in their own image with their same faults and characteristics so as to have an excuse for why they lived such miserable lives and why they amounted to nothing but sin in their own lives. The worship of the gods was not something that was done out of adoration for the god but was instead something that was done as an act of control, a coping mechanism for life.
13. *How does Borrowed Plumes reflect the code of justice of the civilization to who it is ascribed? What are some inherent weaknesses in the system?*

- In the story of the Borrowed Plumes, when the Serpent sought justice for the lives of his children after the betrayal of the Eagle, the God of Justice gave the Serpent the chance to take revenge, which fell right in line with the Babylonian idea of what Justice was as dictated by Hammurabi’s Code and “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”. The weakness in this system is that revenge is not really justice instead it is punishment for doing wrong and in the end you really aren’t going to come to a genuine solution to the problem at hand, it is a system that seeks to deter people from doing wrong by scarring them away from the action.

14. *Why did man create gods? Why did he create the kind of gods he did? Cite examples from the readings.*

- Man created gods because they have the nature of the one true God, whose nature is to create. They chose to create other gods because in order to serve the Lord God man must be like Him, that is to say be holy; however with other gods man can create them to do as men do. The gods that men created were easily given to rage and sexual passion and thus men have an excuse to continue living in the same fashion. An example of how this works within the makeup of Babylonian and other cultures Gods can be found in the Story of Baal. Yam acts like a tyrant when he is made King, he also acted in lust like many men do when Astarte comes before him.
15. *Why did God create man? What Scriptures support this view?*
   - God created man because it is in His nature to create. The very first chapter of His word in Genesis speaks to His creative nature. He created man specifically because they were given the nature of God, which is the ability to love, which is something that God desires as He is in fact love.

16. *Were the Egyptian magicians able to do magic as is represented by that done in the story of Cheops? Why do you think this?*
   - It would make a great deal of sense for Egyptian magicians to have the ability to perform the magic as presented in the story of Cheops, and that is due to similar magic being testified about in Exodus 7. Because Egyptian magicians are noted to have the ability to do what is noted in Scripture, we must be lead to believe that they could do similar things like folding the water over itself which must not have been very much more difficult than turning water to blood.

17. *How did the Egyptian pharaohs and other ancients attempt to achieve immortality? How does this need reflect itself in contemporary secular man?*
   - The Egyptian pharaohs attempted to achieve immortality through their land conquests, through propaganda, through construction projects, and through the legacy of the power of the gods. This is reflected in contemporary men through the building up and acquiring of wealth, through the building of skyscrapers, and through ‘generous donations’.
18. Explain the following concept: There is no such thing as history, only histories. There is no such thing as objectivity, only varying levels of subjectivity

- The concept, “There is no such thing as history, only histories. There is no such thing as objectivity, only varying levels of subjectivity” amounts to perspective. Everyone carries a bias of personal experience and feelings around with them no matter what situation they may find themselves in. This bias affects how stories are told and interpreted and leads us to the conclusions of: “Just because its written doesn’t mean it’s necessarily so.”

19. Do you think the biblical lineage from Genesis 11 is an accurate and rigid timeline? Why or why not?

- I believe that the Genesis lineage is accurate because of the importance of tradition and the Patriarch family that was held by the Hebrew people (descendants of Noah). Also with the timeline that was established using the lineage, it can be used to explain how the earth was repopulated and how cultures around the world worshipped similar gods and why they constructed similar buildings and places of worship.
20. *Discuss three ways in which the Egyptian pharaohs were able to maintain power.*

- The Egyptian Pharaohs maintains power through the use of the myth of the gods which left the common people in a state of subservience and fear. Also they maintained power through the construction of great monuments which awed the people and gave the pharaohs further glory. The Pharaohs also used propaganda to rule over the Kingdom and maintain their dominance by establishing a common communication across the nation state and leading people to believe what they wanted.
Egyptian Gods

- Amon – King of the Gods
- Anubis – Conductor of souls
- Geb – Earth God
- Hathor – Sky Goddess
- Horus – Solar God
- Isis – Sister-spouse of Osiris
- Khnum – Creation God
- Maat – Goddess of Truth And Justice
- Nun – God of watery abyss
- Osiris – Mythological King of Egypt(God of Underworld)
- Re – God of Sun and Creation
- Seth – Incarnate God of Evil

Babylonian Gods

- Apsu – God of Fresh Water
- Tiamat – God of Salt Water
- Anshar – God of things above
- Kishar – God of things below
- Anu – God of Heaven(Supreme God)
- Ea – Wisest and Shrewdest of Gods
- Enlil – God who installs sovereigns

Canaanite Gods
• Baal – Lord of the air and rain
• Yam – Dragon who ruled the waters
• God – Supreme God
• Ashtar – Youngest of the Gods
• Astarte – Tries to seduce the Dragon
• Anat – Goddess of Battle