



Lerhaus

A New Shul

Dear all,

As we continue to study the stories of Genesis, many of which concerned Abraham, we now have branched out to Lot and to his family, most notably his wife, Mrs Lot and her eternal condition of a stone like pillar of salt. Although she is unnamed, she is not unknown or even unrecognized.

All of these stories are informative, there is more than enough for us to return to year after year to the same episodes and find new meanings buried not too deeply beneath the surface. Some will insist on archeology and anthropology to understand the hidden meanings, other will insist on Rabbinic and at times Christian commentaries to understand these narratives, and yet others will insist on faith and faith alone. All of these understanding will bear fruit and give us insight to the past and many will equally claim, the present as well, especially in terms of foreshadowing and prophecy.

I am sure you all know by now that I am known for my insistence on intertextuality and the importance of laying texts side by side in order to see how they influence each other simply by their placement and what one then draws out from the other. We see this in the art world, which is one of the reasons I will push people to see the now famous arrangements on display at the Barnes museum and even in other museums of more traditional arrangements of their paintings and sculptures.

For those of you who have not seen a "Barnes" wall or the arrangement that Barnes himself designed, please see here below. Much of the Torah and of the Bible has an arrangement in mind in what many of us will mistakenly at times think to be a linear progression. I can assure you, from the standpoint of Biblical scholarship, not to even mention, traditional Jewish arrangement, it is anything but.

I am now famous for insisting that the stories, the narratives and the laws of the Bible are best understood only when placed -- side by side. To be sure, I promise I will add other understandings as well, but first this



[John Martin](#), *Belshazzar's Feast*, c. 1821; half-size sketch held by the [Yale Center for British Art](#)

Important for our consideration -- for both Wednesday at 7:00 PM EST and this Sunday at 3:00 PM EST

- 1) *Who do we meet for the first time in Sodom? **Perhaps** this story should be read side by side with *The Noah story* -- with an eye to the people of Noah's generation.*
- 2) *Will this story also rest side by side with yet another?*
- 3) *Was Lot able to read the 'writing on the wall' --- he certainly was no Daniel?*

We will explore in class Chapter 5 of the Book of Daniel, the one book of the Hebrew Bible not in Hebrew vcz extremely sacred to the Jewish people . . .



Rembrandt, *Belshazzar's Feast*, 1635, (National Gallery, London). The message is written in vertical lines starting at the top right corner, with "Upharzin" taking two lines. See if you can decipher the arrangement of the lettering.

Belshazzar's feast, or the story of **the writing on the wall** (chapter 5 in the Book of Daniel) tells how Belshazzar holds a great feast and drinks from the vessels that had been looted in the destruction of the First Temple. A hand appears and writes on the wall.

The terrified Belshazzar calls for his wise men, but they are unable to read the writing. The queen advises him to send for Daniel, renowned for his wisdom. Daniel reminds Belshazzar that his father Nebuchadnezzar, when he became arrogant, was thrown down until he learned that God has sovereignty over the kingdom of men.

Belshazzar had likewise blasphemed God, and so God sent this hand.

Daniel then reads the message and interprets it: God has numbered Belshazzar's days, he has been weighed and found wanting, and his kingdom will be given to the Medes and the Persians.

Daniel Chapter 5, verse 1

א בלשאצר מלכא, עבד לחם רב, לרברבנוהי,
אלף; ולקבל אלפא, חמרא שנתה

1 Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

ב בלשאצר אמר בטעם חמרא, להיתיה למאני
דהבא ונספא, די הנפק גבוכדנצר אבוהי,
מן-היכלא די בירוּשלים; וישתון בהון, מלכא
ורברבנוהי, שגלתה, ולחנתה.

2 Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king and his lords, his consorts and his concubines, might drink therein.

ג באדין, היתיו מאני דהבא, די הנפקו מן-היכלא
די-בית אלהא, די בירוּשלים; ואשתיו בהון, מלכא
ורברבנוהי, שגלתה, ולחנתה.

3 Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his lords, his consorts and his concubines, drank in them.

ד אשתיו, חמרא; ושבחוי לאלהי דהבא ונספא,
נחשא פרזלא-אעא ואבנא.

4 They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

ה בה-שעתה, נפקו (נפקה) אצבען די יד-אנש,
וקתבון לקבל נברשתא, על-גירא די-כתל היכלא די
מלכא; ומלכא חזה, פס ידא די כתבה.

5 In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the palm of the hand that wrote.

Stay tuned, it only gets more interesting . . .

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Lerhaus: A Newshul of Jewish Thought and Learning

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