Working Doc

* Super Summary
  + awd
* Dad
  + ​​convivencia entre judios y romanos
  + por salvar al romano, se vuelvee el hijo prodigio y se especializa en la carrera de caballos
  + le da agua a jesus
  + le da agua a los lepros, que estaban fueras de la ciudad
  + temas para analizar con respecto al valor y la amistad. lo libera
  + - [ ] en roma y en grecia los esclavos no hacian trabajo grupal. enorme cantidad de maestros que le daban clase a la clase alta eran esclavos. benhur era judio de clase alta, asi que estaba bien instruido. lo toma como hijo adoptivo (y deja de ser esclavo) a benhur
* TF Message
* Canvas Notes

Ben-Hur is a classic epic film directed by William Wyler and released in 1959. The film is set in the Roman Empire during the reign of Emperor Augustus and follows the story of Judah Ben-Hur, a Jewish prince who is falsely accused of treason and sentenced to life as a slave. The movie explores themes such as revenge, forgiveness, and redemption, and the director employs various elements of Roman material culture and history to emphasize these themes and convey a powerful message.

One of the most notable aspects of Roman material culture that the filmmaker chose to incorporate into the film is the concept of the Roman Circus. The Circus was an important part of Roman culture and entertainment, and the film features several scenes set in the Circus Maximus, where chariot races were held. The chariot race sequence is one of the most iconic scenes in the film and is crucial to the development of the overarching theme of the story. The race is used as a metaphor for the struggles and challenges that Judah Ben-Hur faces throughout the movie, and it symbolizes the conflict between good and evil, justice and injustice.

The director uses the chariot race as a means of highlighting the character's development, both emotionally and physically. The race serves as the climax of the story, where Judah Ben-Hur confronts his rival and former friend Messala, who betrayed him and caused him to be sentenced to a life of slavery. The race is not just a physical contest, but also a mental one, where the two characters are pitted against each other in a battle of wits and determination. Through the race, the director emphasizes the theme of revenge and its consequences, as well as the importance of forgiveness and redemption.

Another important aspect of Roman material culture that the filmmaker chose to incorporate into the film is the concept of slavery. Slavery was a pervasive and significant part of Roman society, and the film portrays the harsh realities of slavery through the character of Judah Ben-Hur, who is forced to endure years of servitude and abuse. The movie highlights the inhumanity and brutality of slavery, but also emphasizes the resilience and strength of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Through the character of Judah Ben-Hur, the director shows that even in the darkest moments, hope and perseverance can triumph over despair and oppression.

Religion is another class topic that the filmmaker engages with in the movie. The film portrays the tension and conflict between Judaism and Roman paganism, and the character of Judah Ben-Hur is shown struggling to reconcile his faith with his desire for revenge. The movie emphasizes the importance of faith and the power of belief in shaping one's destiny. Through the character of Judah Ben-Hur, the director shows that even in the face of persecution and injustice, faith and conviction can provide a sense of purpose and meaning.

The director's choices regarding Roman material culture and history had a significant impact on the film's presentation and success. The use of the chariot race sequence as a metaphor for the overarching theme of the story is a powerful and effective narrative tool, and the scene has become one of the most iconic in cinema history. The portrayal of slavery and its impact on the character of Judah Ben-Hur is also a poignant and impactful aspect of the film, and the movie's depiction of the tension between Judaism and Roman paganism is historically accurate and provides a rich context for the story.

In conclusion, Ben-Hur is a classic epic film that engages with various aspects of Roman material culture and history to convey a powerful message about the importance of redemption, forgiveness, and faith. The filmmaker employs the chariot race sequence as a metaphor for the overarching theme of the story, and the use of slavery and religion as class topics provides a rich context for the narrative. The director's choices regarding Roman material culture and history play a significant role in the film's success, as they emphasize the themes and messages that the director intends to convey.

The use of Roman material culture in the film also serves to create a vivid and immersive setting for the story. The film's depiction of the Roman Empire, with its grand architecture, lavish costumes, and impressive chariots, creates a sense of spectacle and grandeur that draws the audience into the world of the film. The use of authentic Roman locations and sets also adds to the film's historical accuracy and creates a sense of verisimilitude that enhances the movie's impact.

Overall, the use of Roman material culture and history in Ben-Hur is instrumental to the development of the film's overarching themes and narrative. The director's choices regarding the incorporation of slavery, religion, and the Roman Circus provide a rich and nuanced context for the story, and the use of authentic Roman locations and sets creates a sense of authenticity and historical accuracy that adds to the film's impact. The use of these elements helps to develop the film's main character, set the tone of the movie, and create a powerful and impactful message about redemption, forgiveness, and faith.

Because the novel is primarily didactic, intending to teach the story of Christ and highlight its theological elements, the role of Christ’s life and death in Christianity is a recurring concept in the novel.

Of particular importance is the spiritual nature of Christ’s mission. As Jews, Ben-Hur and Simonides anticipate that Christ, as the Messiah, will conform to their expectation that the Messiah’s mission will necessarily be political. They base their understanding in the prophecies contained in Jewish scriptures (256-57) and believe that the Messiah will overthrow Roman rule in Judea and perhaps even install Jerusalem as the new Rome ruling over the other nations of the world.

As an Egyptian, however, Balthasar has no preconceived notions of the Messiah and has intuited the nature of God purely through his own piety. Because he lacks the preconceptions of Judaism and because his own salvation would otherwise be impossible, Balthasar understands that the Messiah’s mission must be on behalf of all mankind, not merely the Jews, and cannot be political in nature (211-13). As Ben-Hur gets to know Jesus, Balthasar’s argument begins to convince Ben-Hur, but neither he nor Simonides truly accept it until they witness the Crucifixion.

A second important theological theme is the necessity of Jesus’ death on the cross so that he might be resurrected and redeem the world. Several times during the process of Jesus’ arrest and Crucifixion, Ben-Hur offers to bring martial aid, but Christ never answers him. Ben-Hur comes to understand that Jesus’ mission must require Christ’s death and turns down an offer from his Galilean soldiers to raise a rebellion in his own name. In this moment, a sort of divine inspiration comes over Ben-Hur so that he understands that “the death was necessary to faith in the resurrection, without which Christianity would be an empty husk” (422).

Ben-Hur has witnessed Jesus’ miracles and knows that Jesus could free himself if he wished. From Jesus’ beatific acceptance of his fate, Ben-Hur finally comes to accept that the Messiah’s mission is not political and that his death will mean redemption for the entire world, not merely the Jews.

# Ideas

* Roman material culture is sprinkled all over the movie and sets the tone not only for the scenery but also for some of the recurring themes throughout the movie. Those of duty, perseverance, honor, and revenge. Religion is also a persistent theme in the movie, and the values of the Christian religion are constantly at odds with the values of Rome.
* From the beginning of the movie, Romans are depicted as superior. Starting with the scene where Massala defends Romans moral right to have invaded Judea, with the reasoning that they
  + There is an interesting dynamic with Roman’s own portrayal of what means to be Roman. The movie shows that Romans took great pride in being Roman, and this inflated their ego and gave them a sense of somewhat deserved, somewhat undeserved, sense of superiority.
    - According to Messala, it is not by chance that they have reached the power that they have. “That village in the Tiber was chosen to rule the world.”
      * “It was fate that chose Romans to civilize the world. Their roads, ships connect every corner of earth. Roman Law, architecture, literature.”
    - This can be clearly seen in the beginning, when Messala states that he considers Judah Roman, since he holds him as someone at the same level.
    - It is worth noting, however, that it is not the things they believed made them superior that actually did, but actually a series of bad traits portrayed throughout the movie.
      * UE: Messala had better chances of winning the chariot race because brought a Greek chariot, which had spikes on the side that allowed him to beat opponents.
        + In the same scene, we see how little Romans cared about other people, they were very **practical and shallow**. Even though people were dying during the race, they wanted it to continue.
      * Romans will always take advantage when they can. This is a recurring theme in the movie. In many scenes, Judah is given the opportunity to do something that is morally wrong, but that would benefit him in the short and long term, yet he chooses not to.
        + Examples of this include:

When he is alone in the room with unarmed Messala, he shoots at the wall instead of Messala.

The boat scene when Judah is freed from his shackled and find the captain in his sleep.

When the boat is sunk, he saves the Roman captain, even though he did not need to.

When he Messala is injured after the race, he doesn’t choose to do anything bad to him. “He doesn’t see him as his enemy.”

* + - * + **Related to the Christian value of no death**, but of love and forgiveness. Reinforced explicitely by Judah’s wife towards the end of the movie.
    - Not everything is different however, in both cultures, there is a strong sense of duty
      * TALK ABOUT SENSE OF DUTY
    - These traits are at odds with fundamental Jewish values.
      * The “right” of Jewish/Christian people is shown throughout the movie too, through the elements highlighted above.
      * These Jewish values can be reunited after Jesus’ cruxifiction with the famous knowledge from the Bible that Jesus died to redeem all humans of their sins, regardless of what group they belong to.
  + Superiority is shown implicitly through
    - Clothing
      * Roman characters, regardless of their Roman social status, are depicted as superior. They are generally draped in togas or show in their legion armor.
      * Judah and the other Jewish characters dress simply, without adornments or jewelry. The little use of jewelry on Ben-Hur’s end comes from a place of faith, keeping one ring for his wife and one ring for his father.
        + Maybe expand on this.
      * The way the Roman dress symbolize their worldly power and ambition, while the Jewish dress symbolizes the austerity of the Jews and their humility before god, which they are always supposed to keep in mind.
    - Place
      * There is a stark difference in the scenes that take place in a predominantly Jewish environment and a predominantly Roman one.
      * Example: When the Consul returns from his victorious fights back to Rome, we can see the circuit that victorious commanders did after coming back from battle. Throughout the entire scene, we can see the splendor of Rome.
        + FIND SOMETHING IN THE NOTES ABOUT ADORNISHMENTS AND SUCH
      * The Jewish towns are a lot more modest. Even Ben-Hur, who is a prince and a rich man, has a palace that is not filled with gold, marble, and other shiny objects.
        + CHECK SCENE TO POINT OUT SPECIFIC DIFFERENCE
      * The comparison is the starkest between where the leppers live in misery, and the previous scene of the Roman Chariot wining.
        + FIND SCENE AND DO SMALL DESCRIPTION OF LEPPER SCENE
      * Messala states that his office is “not grim, but austere, virtuous and Roman”. He cares about the Roman ideals, and following them.
    - Slaves
      * Ben-Hur treats his slaves as his equals. His accountant, who he repeatedly refers to as his dearest friend is legally his slave. The accountant’s daughter, who Judah frees without a second thought
      * By contrast, the depiction of how Romans treat slaves is very different. In all the boat scenes throughout the movie, the legionnaires are abusing the slaves and treat them in an inhuman manner.
      * While this was not always the reality (there were well-educated slaves that did high-class work for their masters) it is a tool used by the filmmakers to show the difference of treatment that is given to those legally inferior to them by both the Romans and the Jews.
  + It is shown explicitly by the following scenes:
    - Messala bets 4-1 that he will win against Judah, because it is “The difference between a Roman and a Jew”. This happens in the baths, a prototypical Roman space.
  + I seems like this superiority comes at a cost, it is the moral values of the Romans that let them achieve the material greatness that they have, while it it the moral righteousness of the Jewish that bring them long-term wellness and ultimately triumph.
    - Ben-Hur states that he know Messala “well before the cruelty of Rome spread in his blood.” He says that “Rome destroyed Messala” in the same way that Rome destroyed his family.
* D

# Skeleton

* Introduction
* awdawsdsadawasswqeasdas
* Conclusion

# Essay Writing Resources

* [How to Write a Five-Paragraph Essay](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/five-paragraph-essay/)
* [How to Write an Essay Outline in 4 Steps](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/essay-outline/)
* [Toulmin Argument](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/historical_perspectives_on_argumentation/toulmin_argument.html)
* [Organizing Your Argument](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/establishing_arguments/organizing_your_argument.html)

# New Try

**Thesis:** The director draws from Roman culture and highlights their opulence, egocentricity and unscrupulousness to demonstrate Roman oppression in Judea and convey a Christian message.

**Christian message:** Christians believe that accepting or rejecting Jesus, and his message of love and redemption, can affect our eternal destiny. The values are love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control[[\*]](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Galatians%205%3A22-23&version=NIV).

**Introductory Explanation 1**: The director modifies the original novel’s story of Jesus and peripheral Biblical figures and turns it into the story of an underdog.

1. **Claim 1:** **It is likely that**, This was done in an effort to make the movie more successful.
   1. **Grounds:**
      1. This movie was created by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, a commercial studio[[1]](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0052618/).
   2. **Warrant:**
      1. **Presumably**, commercial studios want profit, for which they need a move to be successful.
   3. **Backing:** Successful moves are those that apache to wide audience, and Americans like a good underdog story.
2. **Claim 2:** This was done in an effort to make the religious message more clear.
   1. **Grounds:**
      1. The original story of Ben-Hur has many subplots, each with its intricacies.[[2]](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0052618/faq)
   2. **Warrant:**
      1. **Often** a complicated story has to be cut down for the message to be effectively conveyed in a short amount of time.

**Introductory Explanation 2:** Ben-Hur is used to convey the values of Christianity and the Romans, non-Christian values.

1. **Claim 1:** Ben-Hur is used to convey the values of Christianity: kindness, and exhibits self-control.
   1. **Grounds:**
      1. There are many scenes where the Romans pick at him, for not taking an opportunity to get his way, treating him as weak. When Ben-Hur finds Messala in his office, unarmed, instead of killing him, he throws his lance into the wall, and when he finds sleeping, the Captain of the vessel that had been harassing him earlier, he does not kill him.
      2. Throughout the entire movie, he battles his own thoughts of hatred, trying to eradicate them and behave according to Jewish morals.
   2. **Warrant:** While not depicted as Christian in the beginning, we can see his increased faith in Jesus as the Messiah, with the culmination at the end of the movie when Jesus’ redemption saves his loved ones. It is understood that Ben-Hur becomes a Christian from that point onwards.
2. **Claim 2:** The story doesn’t care much about the fact that they are Roman, because they do not intend to depict the Romans as evil, but as Christians as good. Because of that, somewhat generic bad traits are the ones displayed in the Romans, even though they draw heavily from material culture and real-life events to make these evident

**Main Claim 1:** Romans are shown as opulent, while the Jewish and Christians are not.

1. **Subclaim 1:** The edifications in the movie highlight the difference between Jewish and Roman opulence.
   1. **Grounds:**
      1. When Ben-Hur and the Consul return to Rome after their sea voyage, the viewer is presented with one of the most magnificent scenes of the movie: the Roman Triumph[[\*]](https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/114709/files/folder/Lecture%20Slides?preview=16859730). Hundreds of soldiers in shiny armor walking through Rome with the victorious general in a chariot up front.
      2. The display of Rome as a white shiny city made of marble and gold paints a stark difference with the scenes of the Jewish towns, which are less bright, with fewer buildings, most of which are made of wood and mud.
      3. Even when not in the presence of Caesar, the viewer can see that Roman residences are made of expensive materials and contain expensive items, like the purple carpet in the Consul’s residence[[\*]](http://www.tribunesandtriumphs.org/roman-clothing/colors-of-roman-clothing.htm).
   2. **Warrant:** There is a stark difference between the scenes that take place in a predominantly Jewish environment and a predominantly Roman one.
2. **Subclaim 2:** The clothes in the movie highlight the difference between Jewish and Roman opulence.

TIE BACK

**Main Claim 2:** Romans are shown as egocentric, while the Jewish and Christians are not.

1. **Subclaim 1:** Messala’s belief about Rome’s right to rule the land shows Romans as egocentric.
   1. When they subjugate others it is a necessary sacrifice.

TIE BACK

**Main Claim 3:** Romans are shown as unscrupulous, while the Jewish and Christians are not.

1. **Subclaim 1:** Romans’ treatment of slaves shows them as unscrupulous.
2. **Subclaim 2:** Messala’s treatment of insurgence reflects his thoughts of other tribes (Barbarians because they do not align with Rome - Wk7) and Roman brutality (What he says he’ll do to other tribes - Trajans Columns - Wk7.15)

TIE BACK

**Conclusion:**

1. Drawing from material culture and Roman history is crucial for this movie since it is one of the main tools used by the writers and director to build the negative image of the Romans.

Religion, Slavery and Purpose through Ben-Hur (1959)

# Prompt

Watch a movie that has something to do with Rome. Suggestions are listed below, but if you have another proposal, please ask about it before starting on your essay.

You will then write an essay analyzing how the filmmaker chose to engage either with some aspect of Roman material culture or with a particular class topic (e.g. religion, slavery, etc.) in the project. How instrumental is material culture to the development of the film's overarching theme or narrative? How did choices made regarding it affect the film's presentation and/or success? What aspects are highlighted (or not), and why? Does it work towards the development of a main character? Does it help with the setting of a particular scene? Does it set the tone of the film at large? How is the chosen topic presented? What aspects about it did the director chose to include or omit? Why might they have made these decisions? Try to resist pointing out historical inaccuracies. (We already know that every movie has them!) Instead, focus on a main message in the film and how an aspect of Roman material culture or life is employed to convey that.

# Skeleton

* I am going to write about

# Movie Thoughts

* Religion is a key part of the film. In the initial scene, when Masala takes over the Jersualem garrison, the more experienced general warns Masala that the people of Judea are not paying their taxes, but more important, there is an insurgence of the mind.
  + Masala recommends supressing it, but how do you suppress an idea.
    - You fight an idea with another idea.
  + Masala and Benhur get into fight because Masala won’t withdraw legions from judea
    - Masala has change, his quarters are “not grim, austere, virtuous, roman” -> comment about this
  + They treat jews as inferior, and just becaus benhur is grea, they consider him roman. They treat religion as a Rebellion, against the roman regime
  + It’s a roman world, you have to become Roman if you want to live in it. “That village in the tiber was chosen to rule the world”
    - It wasn’t just legions, it was fate that chose romans to civilize the world. They roads, and ships, connect every corner of earth. ROman law, architecture, literature.
    - Fight against rome is futile, it will only resist in the extinisions of the jews.
    - Masala sees himself as a conqueror, but friendships is over that -> roman principle
  + Emperor builds, turns bricks to marble
* The people that resent the Romans are not “patriots”, they are protesters. The ROman gots chose them to rule, that, not the Jewish one.
* Interesting treatment of slaves, not as workhorses, but as asomething that can happend to anyone. The accoutnant is a slave, and his daugheter is also a slave. Judah treats his accountant as a slave, and he dresses similarly to him, even though he eis a slave. He is very well educated (potentially from a previous non-slave past)
  + Daughter is marrying a freeman, who will pay for her “freedom”. She didn’t choose to marry him
  + It’s strange, I never felt a slave
* Masala does not forgive Ben-Hur for the accident, that killed the military person, even though he knew it was an accident, because he himself had a tile fall. Messala sentences everyone in the family.
  + Family will be nailed in crosses in front of him.
  + Judah is seen as weak, because he is begging, Massala begged once and that is it. He asks Ben\_hur to kill him, buit he refuses violence. The movie portrays him as morally superior, but weaker.
  + Judah asks for god’s help and he receives it. It is Jesus. **IMPORTANT**
* Judah becomes a slave, a rower (can also talk about change of positions). Judah is portrayed as full of hate, and according to the Romans, that fuels you, but according to the Jewish, and Ben-Hur, it is a bad thing.
  + Judah didn’t kill him who had the change (the leader of ship). The Romans always talk to him as if he should take advantage of opportunities to kill them, similar to spear scene with Massela, but Judah never does.
  + According to captain, god has forsaken Judah, he has no more power than the images the captain prays to. Captain believes that roman gods won’t help him, so no one will help Judah.
  + “Strange stubborn faith to have, to believe existence has a purpose (1:16)”. Roman had a purpose but existence drove it out of him.
  + Ben-Hur always shows caring for others, when the ship was sinking , he spent his time trying to free all the slaves that he could.
  + When ship sinks, he frees captain of the ship and doesn’t let him commit suicide.
  + Captain to Judah: “In an eagerness to save you, your god has also saved the Roman fleet.”
* When coming back to Rome, the greatness of Rome, as perceived by the Romans and as told to the rest of the Empire, is shown (1:31). This is what Massela was referring to in the beginning.
  + The caesar talk to Judah because he understand that it is strange that if he actually had tried to kill the governor, it’d be strange if he saved ta Consul.
  + The greatness is again shown through the spectacles of Rome, which paint a very different picture to that of Judea.
* The Consul, for saving his life, adopts him as his son after having received him as a slave, and trains him to be one of the best charrioteers of Rome. Judeah becomes the legel heir to his property.
  + Captain changes his faith “whoever gos are, they take small interest in an old man’s hopes.” Judah changes to “They have their way”.
* When going back to Judea, he stops and sees charrioteers in training. They are amazed by the fact that he run in ROme, because it is seen as a great privilege and top tier, likegoing to a great School or coming from a rich country.
  + “One god I can understand but one wife is not generous.”
  + The charriotieer convinces Judah to beat Massela in the races, since that would ruin his pride, especially when coming from a Jew. **IMPORTANT -> Judah doesn’t want to kill him, but pride is fine**
  + Why not accept god’s wishes?
  + He is for the first time introduced to the idea of Jesus
* Judah returns to his empty house, completely desacrated with time.
  + Accountant is happy to see him again. Even though hi is a slave, friendship comes first.
  + He finds out that his relatives are dead. -> Accountant dies
  + Forgiveness and love are more powerful than hatred <- comming from the woman
* When going back the scene of Messala’s house, it is adorned with everything from Rome. Wherever Romans invaded, they kept their style.
  + Inversion of power, Judah is now Messalah’s boss.
* The family becomes leppers but they don’t want ester to tell Judah. They want him to remember them as they were
  + Ester loves Judah because he is not changed.
* Bookmaker goes to a Roman bath, where all the generals are allowed them to bet on horses. This is a trap. The bookmaker baits Messala into betting 4-to-1 that he wil winn against Judah, a Jew.
  + “The difference between a Roman and a Jew”.
  + The boomer purposefully bets a lot.
  + He then goes back and trains Judah in chariot racing so that he can beat Messalah.
  + Before racing, he is given the star of david.
  + When the horses are getting prepared before the race, we can see how monumental it is, and how adorned the Roman charriots are.
    - Messalah is mocked for driving a Greek chariot.
  + The circus is gigantic, in Roman fashion.
  + The emperor, is there, together with th entire cour
  + hey dedicate the games to the glory of the Gods and Rome.
  + We can see they are very practical people because someone dies and they just grab him and remove him from the race without stopping
  + Messala using greek chariot to kill ppl.
  + Messala tried to hit Judah with his leash, but Judah grabs it back and hits him, causing him to Messalah to lose the race.
  + Even though a ROman lost, Judah is crowned the winner.
* Judah still still sees no enemy in Judah, he does not use hate. Judah finds out they are leppers, and he sobs.
  + There is a juxtaposition between the greatness of the Roman empire, and the leppers who live in misery.
* By the end of the movie, they find the son of god, Jesus, who gave him water when he needed it.
  + God has answered the request
  + Ben-Hur doesn’t want to listen to Jesus, he want to bgo abc to Rom. He has adopted some of the Roman spirit. The person tells Judah that he insist on death. Judah is faithful to his father.
  + Even though they are next to jesus, the promise person, they appear to live very poor, which presents a big contrast to the room of his father, which is magnificent.
  + “I knew him well before the cruelty of Rome spread in his blood. Rome destroyed messala, the same way Rome destroyed my family.”
  + With great power, error is great. He chooses to not follow the path of his father and not become Consul. He stil identifies as himself.
  + Judah has an internal conflict because he is told by wife to follow Balthasars words and Jewish values, the hatred inside him makes him want to spread life. He gets out of that rut in his head when his wife tells him that he is going to become Messala if he continues like that.
* Judah finds out that Tirzah is dying, and his mother find out that Judah knows
  + They go back to town to look for help and there they find out that everyone is gone to look for Jesus’ trial, the young Rabbi from Nazareth. He has done nothing to their knowledge.
  + Except the revolution from the beginning.
  + During the trial, once again the grandiousness of Roman buildings is evident, and the difference in clothing and decorations between the Roman and the Jews too.
* They finally hung Jesus from the cross
  + The theme of purpose once again intermingles with that of religion, where they say that Jesus was brought onto this world with the purpose of sending the message, and that he has served his purpose.
  + The storm represents the anger of god against the death of Jesus. He is portrayed from various angles in the cross. They are cured, since Jesus died to redeem everyones sins. Also the water which was also needed in the dry land also comes back.
  + Everything begans to be fixed again, Judah fixes the Mezuzah in the entrance of his home, his relationship with his wife is good and he gets to be with his healthy family once again.
    - * There is a stark difference in the scenes that take place in a predominantly Jewish environment and a predominantly Roman one.
      * Example: When the Consul returns from his victorious fights back to Rome, we can see the circuit that victorious commanders did after coming back from battle. Throughout the entire scene, we can see the splendor of Rome.
        + FIND SOMETHING IN THE NOTES ABOUT ADORNISHMENTS AND SUCH
      * The Jewish towns are a lot more modest. Even Ben-Hur, who is a prince and a rich man, has a palace that is not filled with gold, marble, and other shiny objects.
        + CHECK SCENE TO POINT OUT SPECIFIC DIFFERENCE
      * The comparison is the starkest between where the leppers live in misery, and the previous scene of the Roman Chariot wining.
        + FIND SCENE AND DO SMALL DESCRIPTION OF LEPPER SCENE
      * Messala states that his office is “not grim, but austere, virtuous and Roman”. He cares about the Roman ideals, and following them.

# Essay

* How instrumental is material culture to the development of the film's overarching theme or narrative?
* How did choices made regarding it affect the film's presentation and/or success?
* What aspects are highlighted (or not), and why?
* Does it work towards the development of a main character?
* Does it help with the setting of a particular scene?
* Does it set the tone of the film at large?
* How is the chosen topic presented?
* What aspects about it did the director choose to include or omit?
* Why might they have made these decisions?

Stories are a powerful medium for conveying ideas as they can capture the audience's imagination and emotions, leaving a lasting impression that can inspire, challenge, or provoke thought. Such is the story of Ben-Hur, a Jewish prince of Judea who in the first century AD fought Roman oppression in Judea in the first century AD.

The 1959 film “Ben-Hur”, directed by William Wyler is a cinematic masterpiece that follows the life of Judah Ben-Hur, a Jewish prince, in the beginning of the first century. It is based on Lew Wallace’s Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ, one of the most influential Christian novels of the 19th century, which tells the story of Jesus, as well as many peripheral Biblical figures. While the novel focused on didacticism and taught Jesus’ story through Judah’s redemptive arc through piety, the movie adopted a more modern narrative. Potentially to appease a wider contemporaneous audience, the director has chosen to focus on the story of an underdog, which by following the Jewish/Christian god and his morally righteous teaching, ultimately finished victorious.

Instrumental to an underdog story, is the creation of an antagonistic, seemingly all-powerful character with whom the underdog will have to battle to get his way. In the interest of making the Romans look like the villains of the story, the Director chooses to omit certain positive aspects of Roman life, and while most of the scenes shown are representative of the Roman society that we have studied in class so far, the movie highlights many negative elements and a few positive ones.

Since they enter the city of Jerusalem for the first time at the beginning of the movie, every time we see Romans, they are draped in togas or showing ostentatious legionnaire armor. The military generals showcase jewelry and colored gear and the way they dress symbolizes their worldly power and ambition. To contrast their apparent physical superiority, and to highlight the cost of it, the film shows what casualties the world had to suffer for them to reach their place. Messala, a Roman commander, tells the story of how he has had to burn villages to the ground, and in the beginning, they showcase that failure to collect taxes is one of the reasons new leadership was brought to that garrison. This is a good portrayal of how Roman armies were seen in some of the more rebellious territories of the empire, brutal, harsh, and privileged.

PUT A CONNECTOR HERE

Another resource that the Director uses to separate the Jews and the Romans, and give the latter a sense of superiority is the rooms they inhabit. There is a stark difference between the scenes that take place in a predominantly Jewish environment and the predominantly Roman ones. Jews are portrayed as being a lot more modest. Even Ben-Hur, who is a prince and a rich man, has a nice palace, but it pales in comparison to the Roman ones. The Roman palaces showcased in the film are white, shiny, filled with gold, and sparkling decorations. They feature a varied range of bright colors, which were expensive things to achieve at the time.

The scenery of Rome when the Consul returns victorious from his sea battle is splendid. Hundreds of men in military gear walked in synchrony and were celebrated by the people of the city and the members of Caesar’s Court. This scene sets the tone for the rest of the film, in which Ben-Hur, the underdog, is tempted by the Romans with their luxury but chooses to keep his morally righteous attitude and fight for his people, and for his loved ones.

To solidify in the viewer the sentiment that the Romans' morals pale in comparison with the Ben-Hur’s, who represents the Jewish ones, many of the negative aspects of Roman culture are highlighted through villainous characters in the film. The main antagonist, Messala, is often used to convey these negative qualities.

In the very beginning of the film, he is introduced as a childhood friend of Ben-Hur and an equal, because that is how Ben-Hur himself remembered him, but quickly it is shown that the Roman ideals have corrupted Messala’s mind and that he is willing to do anything to get his way. Even though he was born in Judea, and holds Ben-Hur, a Jewish Prince, as his brother, he does not doubt about sending soldiers after any person that disrupts Roman rule. After he finds out that there are insurgents in the area that oppose the Romans, he asks Judah to reveal who these people are, so that he can capture them and squander the ideological movement.

Because the movie wants to establish a clear distinction between the morals of the Jews (soon to be Christians) and the Romans, Ben-Hur never matches the level of aggression and hate that Messala had. Every time Judah is faced with the choice between what is morally wrong, but beneficial for him, and what is right, he chooses what is right every time. When he finds Messala in his office, unarmed, instead of killing him, he launches his spear into the wall. When he finds the Roman commander that was harassing him sleeping in his cabin, he does not take advantage of him and later decides to save him when their ship sinks.

Ben-Hur’s moral superiority can also be seen in his treatment of slaves. His accountant, and advisor, his depicted as a friend and an equal, but we later come to find out that he is in fact Judah’s slave. Unlike the Romans, which are shown in the imperial courts to belittle slaves, and on the military boats to harass them, Ben-Hur treats them with respect and dignity. When his slave's daughter comes to him and asks for his approval to marry a merchant, not only does he grant her freedom, but he asks nothing in return, wanting only for her to be happy in her new life.

In conclusion, the movie does a great job of highlighting the positive aspects of the Christian religion, and the negative aspects of Roman culture to drive home the narrative that one should adopt a morally righteous attitude, and follow the faith of the one and only God.

CONTINUE HERE

Judah also struggles with not adopting Roman traits, having spent so much time in presence of Roman loved ones.

While most Roman depictions in the film are in accordance to what we have studied in class about Roman society, the Director chooses to omit certain positive aspects of Roman life in lieu of strengthening the feeling in the viewer that the Romans

sends a clear positive message while effectively engaging with various aspects of Roman material culture and highlighting themes of duty, perseverance, honor, and revenge. Through the use of clothing, scenery, and behaviour, the movie sends the message that one should behave in a morally righteous manner and that it is those people that ultimately win in life. The director

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CONCLUSION

# New Essay