

# Satire, Biblical Language, and Ch 30

- There is a traditional Jewish prayer for men which thanks God for not having made them women.
- **THESIS: Atwood uses satire to ironically alter the prayer to show another way that the fundamentalist theocracy has altered biblical teachings to manipulate the desirably-mindless masses.(204)**
- Few Jewish religious texts have provoked as much indignation and discomfort as the brief passage that is recited by traditional Jewish men at the beginning of the daily morning prayers: "**Blessed are you, Lord, our God, ruler of the universe who has not created me a woman.**"
- The text in question appears as part of a sequence of blessings, found in the Talmud, that are meant to accompany activities that are performed in the course of waking up in the morning, such as opening one's eyes, stepping on the ground, getting dressed, etc.
- For many, it expresses a quintessential misogyny that lies at the core of a patriarchal religion.
- Contemporary apologists insist that it is not intended to disparage women or imply that they are inferior, but merely to express gratitude for the fact that men are obligated to perform more religious commandments.

# HMT Small-Group Discussion 21-30

1. Ch 21: Explore the symbolic significance of the various elements of “birth day.”
2. How does the Scrabble game routine change the relationship between Offred and the Commander? Offred and Serena Joy?
  - a. Analyze the significance of the words Offred plays with.
  - b. Why lotion? What does this incident reveal about the commander?
3. What techniques does Atwood use to progress your understanding of Offred’s friendships for the reader?
  - a. Explore the development of
    - a. Offred and Ofglen’s honesty
    - b. Offred and Nick’s communication
    - c. Offred and the Commander’s power balance
  - b. Explore the ways Atwood progressively reveals the Moira-and-Offred friendship.
4. Ch 28: What is the backstory for the development of Gilead? Analyze Atwood’s presentation of the progressive overtaking of the USA?
5. In what ways does Atwood present that access to jobs and money allow for autonomy?
6. Discuss the symbolic significance of the
7. Do you like or feel sympathy for Luke?
  - a. Is he progressive or conservative? Why?
  - b. What is the emotional impact of the cat narrative?
8. Atwood borrows from other texts to characterize Offred and the Commander and Gilead—to what end? Why “Vogue,” “Mademoiselle,” “Esquire,” “Ms.” and the other specific magazines? Why a Raymond Chandler novel? *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens?
9. Discuss the various ways Atwood has presented the commander’s last handmaid to readers: connect to *nolite te bastardes carborundorum*.
10. How does Atwood add to the Eco critique subtext she’s begun to develop in recent chapters?