

## WHAT IS A THESIS STATEMENT?

In your academic writing, you are often expected to provide a “thesis statement” in the paper, presentation, online post or other composition assignment. In many writing contexts, especially instructive, academic, and professional contexts, a *thesis* or *thesis statement* is very important and helpful to guide the written message. Thus a good quality *thesis statement* is crucial for good quality writing because intentional composition should equal clear and focused communication.<sup>1</sup>

Your wise thesis statement is a directional signpost. It provides clarity, focus, and direction to the writing for the reader. The more clear, focused, and pointed the writing is, the better the reader will understand exactly what you desire to say.<sup>2</sup> A thesis statement is not required in all writing contexts, but a good quality thesis statement of some sort will always assist your communication to readers.

## WHERE IS THE THESIS STATEMENT?

The thesis statement is naturally hidden, underlying the composition. You, the writer, must identify it and draw it out. Identifying a good quality thesis statement requires careful thought and perhaps several revisions. What factors help you determine your thesis statement? Consider the following factors involved in what you are writing:

1. [What kind of composition is it?](#)  
(research paper, essay, discussion post, group presentation, case study, book review, meeting report, journal article, etc.)
2. [What is your tone in this writing?](#)  
(formal, informal, academic, non-academic, professional, poetry, narrative, instructive, counseling, coaching, etc.)
3. [What is your intent for this composition?](#)  
(inform, persuade, evaluate, motivate, etc.)
4. [What kind of audience or reader is involved?](#)  
(academic, professional, informal/personal, artistic, etc.)
5. [How long and involved is this composition?](#)  
(300 words, 5 pages, 20 pages, 40 pages, one chapter of a book, etc.)

## THE ROLE OF THE THESIS STATEMENT

You may think of the role of your thesis statement with the following parable. Your good quality thesis statement functions like a street map for a traveler in a first time visit to a big city. The traveler (*your reader*) wants to get to Point A (*full and correct understanding of the writing*), but Point A is not clearly shown on the city street map (*parts of the composition*).

The traveler needs to be told by someone (*you the writer*) who knows the city well (*the whole composition*) and can tell the traveler exactly what the street names are, and in what needed order, to get to Point A. The correct street names in their proper order as told to the traveler (*reader*) comprise clear, focused and accurate directions (*thesis statement*) to successfully arrive at Point A (*composition communication*).

## EXAMPLE THESIS STATEMENTS

1. To Inform:

The Biblical Hebrew holidays possess messianic, prophetic and devotional meaning.

2. To evaluate:

The Biblical Hebrew holidays possess meanings dependent upon one's religious affiliation and method of interpretation.

3. To persuade:

The Biblical Hebrew holidays reveal spiritual meanings and applications that are very relevant for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians.

4. To motivate:

Devout Christians will receive various benefits from study of the Biblical Hebrew holidays due to vital spiritual concepts and lessons they provide.

---

<sup>1</sup> Webster's Dictionary defines "thesis" as:

**a** : a claim put forward . . . ; *specifically* : a position or proposition that a person (as a candidate for scholastic honors) advances and maintains or offers to maintain by argument[.]

**b** : an affirmation or proposition to be proved or one advanced . . . as . . . the proposition or point of view defended by an argument[.] Synonym: "hypothesis."

From: Merriam-Webster (2002). "thesis." In *Webster's third new international dictionary, unabridged*. Retrieved December 18, 2008, at: <http://unabridged.merriam-webster.com>

<sup>2</sup> Compare thesis description and definition in: Hacker, Diana (2006). *The Bedford handbook* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston/ New York: Bedford/St. Martins, pp. 2-6, 9-11, 24-25.