

## Ancient Near Eastern History & Israelite / Jewish Religion

SS 909 / HT 909

5/23/06

## Today

- Questions? Updates...
- Outline Ancient Events / Influences
- What do we know about Israelite religion?
- What do we know about earliest Jewish history & religion?
- Texts
- \*
- -

## Lectionary Paper

- Introduction – texts, connections, season
- Jews and Christians – implicit, explicit messages, interpretations
- Reconsiderations – new ?'s, attitudes?
- Reflection – changed views?
  
- 3 pages, due 6/2 noon

## A Brief Look at Ancient History

Events and Influences



## Repeated Cycle

- Capture by one empire and destruction
- Rebuilding, stability, “freedom”
- Empire declines, new challengers, war
- New alliances, attempts at freedom
- Empire wins or loses - still leads to war and repeat of cycle, bringing different cultures and ideas through Israel

## A Brief History

- Sumeria
- Egypt
- Israel
- Assyria
- Babylon
- Persia
- Greece

## Basic Timeline

- 1250 (BCE) Exodus from Egypt
- 1000 Davidic Monarchy
- 750 Amos the Prophet
- 586 First Temple Destroyed,  
• Babylonian Exile
- 323 Alexander the Great
- 165 Maccabean Revolt
- 70(CE) Fall of Second Temple
- 200 Mishnah Compiled

## Sumeria

- Fertile Crescent
- 3500 BCE - first cities - Ur
- 3200 BCE - cuneiform
- 1750? BCE - Hammurabi
- Map

Code of Hammurabi (right)  
Sumerian King List (below)

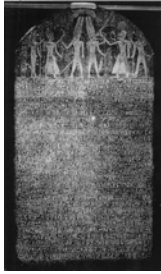


## Egypt

- 3100 BCE - Upper / Lower kingdoms unite
- 2500 BCE - Pyramids built
- 1350 BCE - Akhenaton - monolatry

## Merneptah Stele

(first non-biblical reference to Israel)



## Israelites

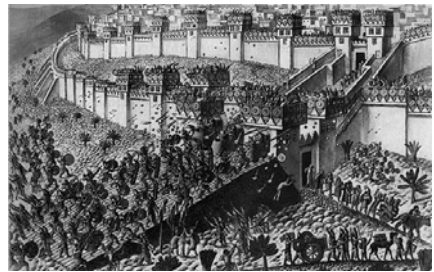
- 1850 BCE - Abraham leaves Ur?
- 1250 BCE - Exodus from Egypt
- 1000 BCE - United Kingdom under David
- 950 BCE - Solomon builds Temple
- 922 BCE - Israel and Judah split

Map

## Assyria

- 720 BCE - Sennacherib's Assyrian armies destroy Israel, Northern Tribes scattered
- Sennacherib attacks Jerusalem, unsuccessful
- "Samaritans" left in place of Israel

## Assyrian attack on Lachish



## Babylon

- 621 BCE - Josiah reforms Kingdom of Judah
- 600 BCE - Jeremiah says "Don't fight Babylon"
- 587 BCE - Nebuchanezzar and Babylonians destroy Jerusalem
- 587-538 BCE - Babylonian Exile

## Babylon



## Persia

- 600 BCE - Zoroaster born (taught dualism)
- 539 BCE - Cyrus the Great defeats Babylon
- 538 BCE - Elites return to Jerusalem
- 515 BCE - New Temple completed
- 445 BCE - Ezra arrives to organize, reform
- map

## Greece

- 336-323 BCE - Alexander the Great
  - Conquers known world
  - Brings Greek culture, thought to East
  - Empire split East/West - Judea in the middle
- 165 BCE - Antiochus IV
  - Oppression leads to Maccabean revolt
- 142-63 BCE - Maccabean kings rule

## Alexander the Great



## Complex Concepts of God

- Names (El / El Elyon / El Shaddai)
  - YHWH - Ruler of heavenly Council
- Certain names / ideas linked to geography
- Roles
  - Ruler / King / Warrior
  - Holy Being / Foundation of Reality
  - Lover / Companion!

## The Puzzle of Biblical Sources

- Compare the stories in Genesis 1-2.4a and 2
- What names for God? Vocabulary?
- What is overall message?
- Do they agree on the facts?

God, Elohim  
 El  
 Gen 1  
 factual  
 man comes last  
 man + woman created equally  
 mystical - let them be  
 Divine ruler  
 God creates void, then rest  
 not ex nihilo  
 wet

Adonai, LORD, God, G-d  
 Gen 2  
 (YHWH)  
 created from the earth  
 man comes first  
 inequality - man > woman  
 story, detail  
 mostly dry?

## Genesis 1 vs Genesis 2

- |                        |                               |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • God (Elohim)         | • LORD God (YHWH)             |
| • Water                | • Dry                         |
| • Creation by speaking | • Creation from mud           |
| • It is good           | • Mostly good [Apple?]        |
| • Sequence             | • “Adam” [earth] 1st          |
| – 1,2,3 Separation     | – Then animals, Eve           |
| – 4,5,6 Creation       | – Adam gives names to animals |
| – Humanity is Climax   |                               |
| – Rest                 |                               |

## The “Problem”

- Some stories / events are repeated
- The details don’t always agree
- There seem to be different voices in the text
  - Vocabulary, theme, message

## A Solution - Documentary Hypothesis - Four Sources

- J - Yahwist (950-850 BCE) - “YHWH”
  - Anthropomorphic God, Mt. Sinai, Judah
- E - Elohist (850-800 BCE) - “Elohim”
  - Non-anthropomorphic God, Horeb, Northern Israel
- D - Deuteronomist (650-621 BCE)
  - Centralized Temple, Disobedience ⇒ Punishment
- P - Priestly (550-400 BCE)
  - Rationalist, genealogies, exilic perspective

## Sources in Genesis 1 and 2

- |                         |                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Priestly (Ch. 1)      | • Yahwistic (Ch. 2)           |
| – Elohim                | – YHWH / Yahweh               |
| – Water (Babylon)       | – Desert (Canaan?)            |
| – Order                 | – Less order (Apple)          |
| – God is above it all   | – God is hands-on             |
| – Creation of Cosmos    | – Creation of Humans is focus |
| – See Flood, Tabernacle |                               |
| – Sabbath               |                               |

## Genesis 1-11 - World Beginnings

- 1-2 - Creation
- 3 - The Apple, Punishment
- 4 - Cain & Abel
- 5 - Adam to Noah
- 6-9 - The Flood
- 10 - Noah’s Heirs - Population of World
- 11 - Babel - Origin of Different Languages

## Deuteronomistic History (DtrH)

- “Former Prophets” [“Latter” = Isaiah, etc]
- Continues theme from Deuteronomy
  - Obey ⇒ success, disobey ⇒ failure, death
- Two Versions
  - Josiah (7th C BCE) - Joshua to Josiah
    - Examples of faithfulness, success
  - Exile (6th - 5th C BCE) - Punishment
    - It was all Manasseh’s fault

## Morality - Reactions to life

- Deuteronomist - Community obeys or not
- Ezekiel - individual chooses, reaps reward
- Psalms (some) - follow YHWH's way
- Proverbs - practical daily advice (religious)
- Ecclesiastes - cynical - nothing matters
- Job - it does matter, but bad things happen
- Apocalyptic - future rewards, eternal life!

## Recap

- Major events
- Outside influences, ideas
- Theological challenges
- Distinctiveness vs. neighbors
- Monotheism
- Returning to previous events for hope

## Other texts to consider

- Gen 6-9 - Noah
- Gen 11- Babel
- Gen 22 – Sacrifice of Isaac (vs. Jephthah?)
- I Kings 18 – Elijah vs. Baal
- Ezekiel 37 – Dry Bones

## For Thursday – Hellenism

- Read VanderKam 53-101
  - Schiffman 125-129, 142-145, 203-230 (skim)
- What was Greek Society like?
- What are some of the ways Jews responded?