

Hellenism II – Maccabees,
Apocalypticism, Pseudepigrapha

SS 909 / HT 909

5/30/06

Today

- More interactions with Greek Culture
- Maccabees – Rebellion and Rule
- Pseudepigrapha
- Apocalypticism
 - Daniel

Greco-Roman ideas

- Philosophy - “Love of Wisdom”
- Socrates - quest for truth, goal = spirit world
 - Nothing written by him exists
- Plato - immortality of the soul - vs physical
 - Socrates’ student - writings focused on Socrates
- Stoicism (Logos) - self-control - no emotion
- Epicureanism - only physical matters, so avoid pain, excess

Greco-Roman Religion

- Deities - Zeus & co - each had role in world
- Deified humans
 - Asclepius - healer - the sick went to shrines
 - Dionysus - died/reborn, invented wine
 - Rulers - most worshipped after death
- Mystery Religions
 - Dionysus / Orpheus - Life, death, rebirth
 - Mithraism - Sun, baptism, Dec. 25, blood
 - Mother Goddesses - Demeter, Isis

Greco-Roman Parallels to Jesus

- Socrates - executed for challenging rulers
- Dionysus, Asclepius - killed, became gods
 - Pattern - divine birth, rescue of infant, missing childhood, sudden appearance as adult with powers, struggle against evil, betrayal, death and resurrection
- Rituals - bread, wine, meals, baptism
- Mother Goddess - parallel to Mary?

Other ways of Grouping

- Narratives
- Rewritten Scripture
- Apocalypses
- Wisdom Literature
- Poetic works
- Mockery of Idols
- Philo & Josephus

History? - Maccabees

- 1 Maccabees - approx 100 BCE
 - Plain style, no miracles (Sadducees?)
 - Faithfulness and courage help preserve freedom
 - Rome as friend
- 2 Maccabees - after 124 BCE? (in Egypt)
 - Theological / supernatural explanation (Pharisees?)
 - Resurrection, praying for the dead, intercession of martyrs
 - The rebellion was an act of God, not humans
 - Suffering as sign of God's reward!

Terminology

- Apocrypha - "Hidden" - in LXX, not HB
 - Canonical to some Christians, not for others ("Deuterocanonical")
- Pseudepigrapha - "False writings"
 - Mostly pseudonymous, non-canonical
- Midrash - texts which explain scripture
- Haggadah - stories that illustrate Torah

Other Apocryphal Jewish Life in Diaspora

- Tobit - narrative set in 7th century Assyria
 - God hears, answers prayers of faithful
 - Angels and demons - exorcism
 - Romance / hero story
- Judith - Nebuchadnezzar - king of Assyria?
 - Threatened by enemies
 - Judith rescues her city - kills the general
 - God's power, not human

Other Apocryphal Faith vs Temptation

- Additions to Esther - Theological revision
 - Added prayers, piety [none in original]
 - Esther keeps kosher [like Daniel]
- Baruch - Prophetic - “by” Jeremiah’s scribe
 - Several anonymous writers
 - Prayers of exiles, hymn praising God for Torah
 - Poems of sorrow, hope, comfort
 - “Letter” from Jeremiah against idolatry

Other Apocryphal Synthesis of Greek, Jewish ideas

- Ecclesiasticus (Jesus ben Sirach) 2d C BCE
 - Wise sayings, moral essays, advice
 - Universe is ordered - don’t fight the system
 - Live in present - no angels, afterlife, etc.
 - Precursor of Sadducees? [no resurrection]
- Wisdom of Solomon - 1st C BCE - Egypt
 - Synthesizes Hebrew wisdom, Greek philosophy
 - Nature and rewards of wisdom, role in history

Other Non-Canonical

- Letter of Aristeas - 1st Century BCE
 - Describes creation of Septuagint (legends)
- Book of Jubilees - 100 BCE? Pharisees?
 - Expands Genesis, Exodus - focus on law
 - Midrash - Abraham etc practice Law of Moses!
 - Law existed from beginning of time
 - Story told by an angel
 - Eschatology, parallels to Dead Sea Scrolls

Other Non-Canonical

- Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs (date?)
 - Ethical advice presented by Jacob’s sons
 - Like wisdom literature, but also has visions, secrets more like apocalyptic
 - Christian revisions?
- Books of Adam and Eve - 1st C CE?
 - Haggadah about fall from grace, serpent
 - Adam and Eve’s life after the fall

Apocalyptic works - Apocryphal

- Already read Daniel, Maccabees
- Additions to Daniel
 - Prayers - persecutions, praise of Maccabees
 - Susanna - Daniel as hero - criticizes the corrupt
 - Bel and Dragon - criticizes idolaters
 - God watches over the faithful

Apocalypse Then Literature and Origins

- *Apokalypsis* - “uncovering what is hidden”
- Discusses future rewards for faithful, punishment for God’s enemies
- Common form during persecutions of late 3rd century BCE - end 1st century CE
- Eschatology - concern over the end-times
- Influenced by both Prophets and Wisdom
- Sheol vs. “Hell”

Characteristics of Apocalyptic I

- Pseudonymity - attributed to famous person
 - Gives more authority to text
- Universal - all nations, not just Israel
- Dualism - two options - nothing in middle
 - Cosmic - earth and heaven [demons]
 - Temporal - present time and future perfection
 - Ethical - a few faithful, but most bad

Characteristics of Apocalyptic II

- Predestination - God has already decided
- Exclusive - avoid all unbelievers
- Little theological speculation
- Belief in violent God
- Eschatological concerns - end of time
- Use of Symbols, codes
 - Insiders can understand, outsiders confused

Numerology

- In ancient times, some numbers were special based on geometric / arithmetic properties
 - 7 - symbolized completion [Creation!]
- Each letter represented a number, so the total for a name / word could be examined for its significance
 - 2 words / names with same total connects them
- Can guess, but can't decode #'s [6-6-6]

Numerology?

- A->Z = 1-> 26
- H-A-R-D-W-O-R- K
 - 8+1+18+4+23+15+18+11 = 98%
- K-N-O-W-L-E-D-G-E
 - 11+14+15+23+12+5+4+7+5 = 96%
- A-T-T-I-T-U-D-E
 - 1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5 = 100%
- L-O-V-E-O-F-G-O-D
 - 12+15+22+5+15+6+7+15+4 = 101%

September 11?

- 9/11 - 9+1+1 = 11
- 11 letters
 - New York City
 - Afghanistan
 - You can't hide
 - Planet Earth
 - Nostradamus
 - Going Insane
- It's Bullshit (a technical term, of course)

Example: Barney = Devil

- Given: CUTE PURPLE DINOSAUR
- U -> V: CVTE PVRPLE DINOSAVR
- Roman #'s: C V V L D I V
- Arabic #'s: 100 5 5 50 500 1 5
- Total: 666
- Therefore: Barney is the Devil
- (or not)

Daniel

- Set in Babylon, written mid-2nd BCE
- Maybe named after mythic wise man Danel
- Included with Kethuvim, not prophets
- 1-6 - Stories of persecution, prophecies
- 7-12 - Four Prophetic / Historical visions
 - Depicts various kingdoms as animals
 - Ch. 12 - promise of resurrection, judgment

The Message of Apocalyptic

- The righteous suffer, but they will be rewarded and evildoers will be punished
- God has a plan
- Future reward, not in this life - Resurrection
- Hope for then and now
 - But how do we know when end comes?
 - So, remain faithful!

Apocalyptic - Apocryphal 2

- 2 Esdras (4 Ezra)
 - Written 100 CE [after 2nd temple destroyed]
 - Set in Babylon 6th century BCE [symbols!]
 - Theodicy - explanation of God's justice
 - How can a just God allow evil?
 - Visions of future and redemption
 - Ezra's authorship of Hebrew Bible, Apocrypha

Apocalyptic works - Non-canon

- 1 Enoch - Jewish apocalypticism
 - Pre-history, Coming Messiah (Son of Man)
 - Dreams, exhortation to faithfulness
 - Inspired rebellions, Christian apocalypticism
- 2 Enoch - Heavenly journey
 - Parallels to Christian teachings on afterlife
- Sibylline Oracles - combines Greek, Roman, Jewish thought

So what?

- Alexander brought Greek ideas - Jews faced assimilation or martyrdom
- Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha offer window into world of early Judaism - the different forms and views that developed as they faced new challenges
- Revisions of Biblical and non-canonical texts show process of change, adaptation

Next time (June 1)

- Scripture and Canonization
- Read Schiffman, 211-220, 517-522
- What would you include? Why?
