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

• Sibyllic 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?