

Lecture 4: The Two Creation Stories.

Reading: Genesis chapters 1-3.

- Gen 1-2:3 First creation account, climaxing in the Sabbath;
- Gen 2:4—3:24 Second creation account, climaxing in the expulsion from the Garden of Eden; [first rebellion in a series of rebellions against God; see next lecture]

Creation stories world-wide (flood stories too as we shall see) generally feature either copulation or battle, esp. between monsters, or both.

- Relics of mythological creation story elsewhere in the Bible; mysterious [sea] monsters; creation of world and end-time restoration involve beating back the forces of chaos:
 - ✦ *Rahav*: Isaiah 51:9 [book of Isaiah, chapter 51, verse 9]; Psalm 87:4, 89:11; Job 9:13, 26:12;
 - ✦ *Yam* ("Sea"): Isaiah 50:2, 51:10; Psalm 74:13; Job 7:12;
 - ✦ *Leviathan* and *Tanin* ("Dragon"): Isaiah 27:1; Psalm 74:14.
- These texts might be thought to support a theory of "cosmic dualism" in which the sea-monsters play the role later played by Satan, but probably not. Serious question whether this is "theology" or "literature".

In contrast: Genesis 1 ("P") and 2 ("J") are non-mythological, perhaps anti-mythological.

- Mythological relics:
 - *tehom*, "the deep," "the waters" in 1:2;
 - ✦ Note correct translation of 1:1-2; not "In the beginning God created" but "When God began to create";
 - ✦ Note all the nouns in 1:2 – whence do all these entities come?
 - *taninim*, "dragons," in 1:21;
 - Plural in 1:26 (*let us make Adam in our image*) which reminds us of the ANE idea of council of Gods;
 - ✦ Later Jews and Christians: the passage refers to God and his angels. But when and where did God create angels?
- In Genesis 2-3: we have folklore relics more than mythological relics (Kugel): magic garden and magic trees and talking snakes;
- God is masculine [and plural!] but sexless [in spite of some gendered-images of God, e.g. Isaiah 42:13-14, juxtaposition of male and female image].

Compare and contrast Genesis 1 ("P") and 2-3 ("J").

Documentary hypothesis in its various forms clearest in the book of Genesis: see Kugel;

- Reminder: it is just a hypothesis, an approach by which to explain some puzzling features of the biblical text.

Genesis 1 ("P"); God creates through speech; through separation/making distinct; and the mysterious verb *bara'* "create";

Genesis 2-3 ("J") is less "philosophical" God is a master craftsman; creating not through speech but through artifice; no *bara'*.

The God of "J" (YHWH or YHWH-Elohim) is *anthropomorphic* [having human shape] and *anthropopathic* [having human emotions]; the God of P (Elohim) is neither.

The point of the P creation story is to explain the Sabbath; see Exodus 20:10; see Kugel; The point of the J creation story is to explain why human society is structured the way it is: an *etiological* tale:

- why working the soil is so difficult;
- why bearing children is so difficult;
- why women are subservient to their husbands;
- why snakes don't have feet;
- why humans wear clothes;
- why men desire women (etiology explicit at 2:24).

Major contrasts of the two versions re creation of Adam:

- At the end of creation (P) or at the beginning (J);
- Male and female together (P) or male first, female second (J);
- Male and female in the image of God (P).

Why does Israel's sacred book open with this material? Probably because of its strong moral focus. A universal God who demands righteousness from all creatures and punishes them when they fail.

- God the creator a prominent theme in the Bible; see esp. Isaiah 45; Job 38-41; Psalm 104; Proverbs 8. The theme of these passages is the universality of God's rule and God's moral order.
- At what point Israelite monotheism reached this conception is debatable; perhaps not until the exilic period.
- Throughout the Bible: God uses natural phenomena (rain, drought, plague) to reward the righteous and punish the wicked.
- Morality tales continue in Genesis (see next Lecture).