

Lecture 5: The Primeval History.

Reading: Genesis chapters 1-11:

- Gen 1 First creation account, climaxing in the Sabbath;
- Gen 2-3 Second creation account, climaxing in the expulsion from the Garden of Eden; [**first rebellion against God**];
- Gen 4 Murder of Abel by his brother Cain and Cain's punishment; [**second rebellion against God**];
- Gen 5: the "begats": ten generations from Adam to Noah;
- Gen 6:1-8 Evil in the world, miscegenation of divine beings with the daughters of Adam; [**third rebellion against God**];
- Gen 6:9-8:14 Noah and the Great Flood;
- Gen 8:15-9:29 aftermath of the great flood; God's pledge not to bring another flood; God's instructions to humanity;
 - ♦ Gen 9:8-17 God's covenant (*berit*) with Noah and his descendants;
 - ♦ Gen 9:19-27 Noah, Ham, and Canaan;
- Gen 10 repopulating the earth;
- Gen 11:1-9 the Tower of Babel [**fourth rebellion against God**];
- Gen 11:10-32 more "begats": ten generations from Noah to Abraham.

Sequence of episodes, not an organic history.

A series of rebellions against God (three of the four told only by J), each resulting in divine punishment: rebellions 1, 2, and 4 result in exile or banishment; rebellion 3 results in the flood.

- God punishes Cain, and the generation of Noah for violating laws that were never stated. The narrator assumes that God can hold people responsible to an inherent or self-evident morality:
 - ♦ Adam and Eve violated a law that had been given to them – not to eat of the fruit; not so here;
 - ♦ After the flood (9:1-7) Noah receives instructions from God for the new society; murder of humans is prohibited, but killing animals is permitted.

Later readers found in these rebellions hints as to the origins of evil (after all, creation is "good" or "very good" in Gen 1; whence evil?); see Kugel.

- The serpent = Satan; Cain = Satan; fallen angels of Gen 6 are the brood of Satan.
- Cain story was moved here (Kugel) to explain how a good creation goes bad.
- But not likely that this was the original function of these stories; no cosmic dualism here.
- These are morality tales focusing on the righteousness of God.

Observations on the Four Rebellions.

Rebellion 1: Adam and Eve in the Garden.

New England Primer (1777) "In ADAM'S Fall, We sinned all."

But etiological ending of the story says nothing about fallen state of humanity; life is hard and humans are mortal (as are all other creatures). Whether Adam was meant to be immortal, not clear; if he was, what then was the point of the tree of life?

Rebellion 2: Cain and Abel.

Eternal conflict between farmers and ranchers/herders.

God prefers the sacrifice of Abel because God prefers meat.

Divine curse of Cain (4:11-12) resembles divine curse of Adam (3:17-19).

Cain is cursed to wander but he founds a city (4:17); probably a commentary on urban crime.

Whom did Cain marry?

Rebellion 3: Miscegenation and the Flood.

Flood story:

- Found in many cultures (see Kugel);
- Biblical flood story seems to have strong connections with the ancient Babylonian flood story from the epic of Gilgamesh (see Kugel);
 - ✦ Most striking is the parallel to Gen 8:21: God smelling the sweet savor of Noah's sacrifice;
 - ✦ But the Biblical story is a morality tale; not so Gilgamesh.
- Biblical account seems to be a combination of two parallel versions (see next lecture);

Background to the flood is the story of divine-human miscegenation;

- This seems mythological, a relic of a much longer story;
- Other such relics in the Torah: Exodus 4:24-26 (circumcision); Serah daughter of Asher (Genesis 46:17, Numbers 26:46); Genesis 48:22 seems to allude to a story that we don't have.

Genesis 9:8-17: God enters into a covenant with Noah, and the covenant has a sign (rainbow); note parallel with Genesis 17 (covenant and sign with Abraham).

Rebellion 4: Tower of Babel.

Certainly of Mesopotamian provenance; cf. flood.

Features of interest:

God's instructions to Noah after the flood (9:1-7) ("P").

Curse of Ham and Canaan (9:18-27) ("J").