

Lecture 15: Joshua and Judges; the Conquest of Canaan.

Reading: Joshua 1-2; 5-8 (Joshua at Jericho and Ai);

Judges 1-5 (The Judges);

Joshua 6:21, 8:22-26 (Treatment of Canaanites (and Amalek));

cf. Deuteronomy 7:1-2, 20:16-18, 25:17-19;

1 Samuel 15;

Kugel 368-385.

Topics:

- Did the Israelites conquer the land of Canaan?
- Are the Israelites guilty of ethnic cleansing or genocide?
- Contrast the story of Jericho and the story of Ai – wherein is God’s power revealed?
- Is Joshua a worthy successor to Moses?

D = the book of Deuteronomy (621 BCE – reign of Josiah);

Dtr = the Deuteronomist = the narrator of Joshua-Judges-Samuel-Kings, the books known as “Former Prophets” (ends with destruction of the temple and the exile of 587 BCE, plus a few small events after that)

The thematic rhetorical connections between D and Dtr are numerous and obvious (Kugel); e.g. Joshua 1:8: This book of the law [Torah] shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.

What is not obvious is the nature of the literary connection between them. Kugel summarizes the views of MBS. A sequence of editors and editions. Deuteronomistic school.

- The key question is how to relate the book found in the temple in 621 BCE with our narrative which extends to the destruction of the temple in 587 BCE.

Master narrative of D + Dtr:

- Farewell discourses and death of Moses (Deuteronomy);
- orderly conquest and apportionment of the land of Canaan, led by Joshua (Joshua);
- followed by period of disorder (Judges) (“there was yet no king in Israel”);
- followed by emergence of charismatic monarchy (Saul) and prophecy (Samuel);
- followed by emergence of dynastic monarchy (David and Solomon);
- followed by the story of the two kingdoms, the (illegitimate) northern kingdom of Ephraim (Israel), which comes to an end in 721 BCE, and the (legitimate but often sinful) southern kingdom of Judah, which comes to an end in 587 BCE.

Main emphasis of Dtr: reward and punishment by God, esp. punishment, esp. for the sin of worshipping other gods.

- Note remarkable programmatic statement in Judges 2;
- both D and Dtr believe in collective punishment by God:
 - ✦ synchronic (of the same time): the entire people are punished by God for the sin of a few, esp. the king (e.g. 2 Samuel 24, David's sinful census);
 - ✦ diachronic (across time): parents and children;
- In contrast human punishment—as a rule—is to be not collective but individual (Deut 24:16 Parents shall not be put to death for children, nor children be put to death for parents; cf. 2 Kings 14:6).

Purpose of the Dtr narrative is to show divine justice (cf. Deut 4). Looks like a history but it's not. It is ideologically motivated narrative.

Stories of Jericho and Ai show different aspects of divine control of history / providence:

- Jericho: God does miracles for his people; cf. miracles of Egypt; cf. Judges 5:20 The stars fought from heaven, from their courses they fought against Sisera. Relatively uncommon in Dtr.
- Ai: punishment for sin. Collective punishment: soldiers die because of Achan's sin, Achan's whole family is punished (an exception to the general pattern).

Story line of Joshua: orderly conquest of the land of Canaan and distribution among the tribes under the leadership of Joshua, successor of Moses.

This too is an ideologically motivated narrative; recall the repeated view of the Israelite covenant myth: we are not of this place.

- God chose Abraham and his descendants, and they chose God; God promised to give them the land;
- Abraham migrated to Canaan from Ur and/or Haran;
- Jacob and tribes go to Egypt where they are enslaved for 400+ years, and then return;
- Exodus; the Mountain of the Lord is in the desert outside the land;
- Israelites conquer the land in an orderly process (Joshua).

MBS do not accept the historicity of the Israelite conquest story (as they do not the narrative of Exodus):

- Contradicted by the opening chapters of Judges;
- No archaeological evidence for a large invasion of Canaan by an outside population around 1300-1200 BCE;
- Specific sites like Jericho don't support invasion / conquest;

- MBS suggest instead: immigration model (whether from within Canaan or without), revolt model (peasants against cities), gradual emergence model. Common denominator: the central highlands, not the coast and not the plains, is the Israelite homeland (Judges 1:19 The Lord was with Judah, and he took possession of the hill country, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the plain, because they had chariots of iron; cf. 4:3);
 - ♦ In the new settlements in the central highlands the material culture is Canaanite; but no pig bones discovered (Kugel);

In D Israelites are commanded to kill all the Canaanites, esp. the Amalekites.

Deuteronomy 7:1-6: When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you—²and when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy. ³Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. ⁵But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire. ⁶For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession. (parallel in Exod 34)

- No cultural relativism vis-à-vis the Canaanites!!
- Paradoxically, here MBS defends God from the charge of genocide: it is not God who is commanding genocide, and the Israelites never committed genocide as stated explicitly in Judges 1-3.
 - ♦ Note the peculiar sequence of clauses in 7:1-6.
 - ♦ Exodus 23:28-30: God will wipe out the Canaanites by a plague (hornets?).
- MBS: D's and Dtr's attitude of intolerance towards the Canaanites is the result of closeness with them (!!) (Othering the other in order to define the Self.) We need to kill them because they are us.
- Only the Canaanites and the Amalekites (1 Sam 15) are treated in this way by the text, not non-Israelites in general (not Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Ishmaelites, perhaps because they are related; not even Philistines).