

## **Lecture 22: Daniel.**

*Reading:* Daniel 1, 3, 7, 10-12.

Daniel is the latest book in the Bible:

- At the cusp between biblical and post-biblical periods (parts of the Book of Enoch and some Qumran texts are older than Daniel)
- About half the book in Aramaic (Dan 2-7)
- Its date probably explains why it's not in the Neviim (Prophets)
- Court tales: Daniel 1-6; presumably had a long history before achieving their current form; other Daniel tales found in the Apocrypha and at Qumran
- Visions: Daniel 7-12 clearly refer to the events of the 160s BCE
- Tension between real date and fictive date (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE: Babylonian and Persian kings)

**Court tales:** Daniel (and his three friends) is a courtier (parallel in Joseph, Mordecai); is a dream interpreter (parallel in Joseph).

Model Jew:

- Eats vegetarian food rather than the rations provided by the king (Daniel 1)
- Prepared for martyrdom: Daniel 3 (refusal to worship an image; fiery furnace); likewise Daniel 6 (Daniel persists in praying to his God in spite of a royal decree; lions' den).

Two of the tales (Daniel 2 [Nebuchadnezzar's dream] and 5 [writing on the wall, Belshazzar's feast]) concern the rise and fall of empires; parallel in Daniel 7-12

- Daniel 2 (and Daniel 7): sequence of four empires: Babylon, Media, Persia, Greece.
  - ♦ Presence of Media implies that this scheme came from Mesopotamia, and is not native to Judaea
  - ♦ Scripted history; the fourth empire is wicked, but is not said to be in league with Satan (who is absent from Daniel)

Daniel 7-12 contain a series of visions by Daniel all provoked by the events of the 160s BCE; numerous references to end time, final battles and cataclysms, secrecy and mystery:

- Dan 7: vision of four beasts (including Ancient of Days and One Like a Son of Man):

<sup>9</sup>As I looked on, Thrones were set in place, And the Ancient of Days took His seat. His garment was like white snow, And the hair of His head was like lamb's wool. His throne was tongues of flame; Its wheels were blazing fire.<sup>10</sup>A river of fire streamed forth before Him; Thousands upon thousands served Him; Myriads upon myriads attended Him; The court sat and the books were opened.

<sup>11</sup>I looked on. Then, because of the arrogant words that the horn spoke, the beast was killed as I looked on; its body was destroyed and it was consigned to the flames. <sup>12</sup>The dominion of the other beasts was taken away, but an extension of life was given to them for a time and season.

<sup>13</sup>As I looked on, in the night vision, One like a human being ("one like a son of man") Came with the clouds of heaven; He reached the Ancient of Days And was presented to Him. <sup>14</sup>Dominion, glory, and kingship were given to him; All peoples and nations of every language must serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, And his kingship, one that shall not be destroyed.

- Jews and Christians argue the identity of the One Like a Son of Man (notes in JSB): is this a reference to a/the Messiah?
- Daniel 8: vision of ram and he-goat
- Daniel 9: meditation on the 70 years of Jeremiah; interpretation of dreams and visions; parallel in the interpretation of written prophecies
- Daniel 10-12: long report by angelic intermediary
  - ♦ No fantastic images here, but all in code
  - ♦ At approx 11:40 the prophecy becomes real and wrong: the king of the south (=Ptolemy) did not lock horns with the king of the north (Antiochus IV Epiphanes); approx. 165 BCE
  - ♦ 12:1-4: <sup>1</sup>At that time, the great prince, Michael, who stands beside the sons of your people, will appear. It will be a time of trouble, the like of which has never been since the nation came into being. At that time, your people will be rescued, all who are found inscribed in the book. <sup>2</sup>Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence. <sup>3</sup>And the knowledgeable will be radiant like the bright expanse of sky, and those who lead the many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever.
    - ★ Note: angelology (each nation has a heavenly prince [Daniel 10]; named angels); resurrection of many, for the purpose of reward and punishment; astral immortality for the righteous; all this part of the end time; secrecy of the revelation
    - ★ Dan 12:3 inscribed in Latin above the stage in Sanders Theater

Daniel provides evidence for Judaism in the second century BCE

Development from Israelite religion → Judaism

- a process, not an event
- some key moments in the transition:
  - ♦ 587 BCE Babylonian exile
  - ♦ restoration under the Persians (516 BCE temple rebuilt)
  - ♦ emergence of the Torah book (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE)
  - ♦ Synagogues appear in Egypt (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE)
  - ♦ Hasmonean revolt against the Greek kings of Syria (Seleucids) 167-164 BCE
  - ♦ Arrival of the Romans 63 BCE
  - ♦ Destruction of the second temple in 70 CE

Israelite society and religion: king, prophet, temple, sacrifices, land;

Jewish society and religion:

- priests and sages instead of a king;
  - ✦ after 70 CE priests become marginal.
- scripture and scriptural interpretation instead of prophecy
  - ✦ Literary prophecy (with the infusion of motifs from wisdom literature) becomes apocalyptic (Kugel):
    - ★ Symbolic visions intermediated by angels (see Zechariah 3-4; Daniel);
    - ★ Scripted history (as in Jeremiah);
    - ★ Remythologization of Judaism, esp. true in Daniel 7;
    - ★ Revealing the secrets of history, esp. the end time;
    - ★ pseudepigraphy.
- synagogues and portable piety instead of the temple
  - ✦ prayer, torah study, and entire regimen of observing the Torah instead of sacrifices
- diaspora and political quietism instead of land
  - ✦ Emergence of communal markers: refusal to worship other gods, eat other foods, circumcision, Sabbath, conversion to Judaism, prohibition of intermarriage

Reward and punishment in the hereafter.