

Lecture Notes for Tuesday, March 21, 2006

As you have certainly noticed, there are actually two completely different stories of creation in the first three chapters of *Genesis*. The first runs from Gen 1-2:4a; the second goes from Gen 2:4b-3:24. The reason is simple, the first account of creation is from the kingdom of Judah, which the second comes from the kingdom of Israel. Their substantive differences are broken down as follows:

Gen 1-2:4a

The origins of this story are NOT found in any other Near Eastern Literature.

Static Story: Not Explanatory

Repetitive
Tabular
Formal
Objective 3rd person Narration

God:

Outside of creation
Not a personality, but a force
All Powerful
All Knowing?
All Present?
Does NOT Command Man
God Creates (Bara)
God's name is YHVH (Adonai)

Man:

Created Male and Female Humans
Eesh and Eesah

Story:

Created everything in 6 Days
Animals were created before Man
Animals are part of the Cosmic Order
Man's role is to rule the Earth
Men and women created simultaneously
Man created in God's Image

Deity Names as he speaks
Deity Speaks Creation
No Inconsistencies

Gen 2:4b-3:24

Every other Near Eastern Civilization from the time has a story of Creation that is similar to this one.

Dynamic Story: Explanatory

Characters
Plot/Narrative
Informal Dialogue
First Person Narrator
Authority figure is challenged

God:

Inside of creation
A personal, humanistic character
Not All Powerful
Not All Knowing
Not All Present
Commands Man
God Forms/Makes (Yasar)
God has no name (Elohim)

Man:

Created specific Man and Woman
Adam and Hawah

Story:

Created everything in One Day
Man created before Animals
Animals to serve man
Man's role is to tend the Garden of Eden
Woman created from Man
God Breathes the Breath of Life into his Nostrils (the Breath of life in All flesh)
Man Names
Four Person Dialogue
Many Inconsistencies

Discussion:

Gen 1-5

The first point of contention in the entire Bible is over Interpretation, specifically how man is to understand what God means (remember that he had to speak to man in his language, a language which by definition is flawed and inconsistent). The Serpent asks if God “really said” that she should not eat of the Tree of Knowledge (3:1). It should go without saying that the Serpent is NOT Satan or Lucifer (who are also two different beings in the Tanakh).

Even when God banishes Cain for slaying his brother Abel, God is not without compassion. He makes Cain a promise that no one outside of his tribe (The Second story of Creation is the story of the Hebrew’s. Other peoples are created by other means and other deities) will harm him. This is seen in Cain’s wife (Lilith), who is not born of Adam and Eve. All Hebrews are descendants of Seth’s son Enosh, while Cain’s son Enoch becomes the father of the first mixed tribe. As the generation pass, each seems to have a shorter life-span (there are exceptions who can not be fully explained, though the rabbis try).

Noah is the Ninth Generation after Adam

Gen 6: 1-8

This piece is certainly a fragment that was included in the first written copies of the Torah. It has analogues in other Near Eastern religions, but not in other Hebrew Sources. The “Sons of God” have been identified as Angels, other divine beings (Elohim), ancient heroes, the Nephilim, and even other races of men. But the life-span of man was cut to 120 years by God because of this matting.

Gen 6:9-11

It says that Noah “walked with God,” which harkens back to Enoch (the Fifth Generation after Adam, not Cain’s son), who also “walked with God”. It says that Enoch did not die, but was taken by God, which should tell us that Noah will be in for a similar ending.

God regrets not just man, but all of his creation, and decided to destroy all flesh (the breath of life) with the Earth, rather than with his divine wrath. Since the Noah story also comes from Israel, we see that it has inconsistencies as well, such as Noah being commanded to take seven pairs of clean animals in 7:2, and then only two pairs of clean animals in 7:8-9. The fact that animals are separated according to cleanliness indicates that this passage is an anachronism as well, since it is written during a time when there are already Kashrut. In 8: 20, we are reminded (Gen 3) that prior to the Flood, man was an herbivore, in that he did not eat meat, but what he grew. After the flood, man is commanded to be a carnivore, which is why the beasts no fear him, as man does God (interesting that no one cites the Bible to Vegetarians ☺).

In Chapter 9, we have a strange curse put upon Ham for seeing his father naked. It is significant that this curse is the blood curse from every other Ancient religion—the curse of the father on the sons that Ham’s descendents must inherit. The curse justifies Slavery. In 10:19, we also have an interesting passage when the territory of Canaan is described. We see that it is “near” Gaza, but Gaza itself is NOT part of Canaan (again, why has no one brought this up in the Knesset?)

Chapter 11 is another common story in the ancient world that explains why all tribes of men speak different languages. Much of Ancient religion was written for this explanatory purpose. Why is this weird thing our custom? Well, because way back in pre-history, so-and-so did this...

Gen 37-50

Jacob/Israel is 20 generations from Adam. He has 12 sons, the favorite of which is Joseph because his is the youngest. When Joseph has his first dream about the Sheaves, his brothers misinterpret it to mean that they must be their brother’s slaves (c.f. the curse of Ham, though Jacob and his sons are descended from Shem, not Ham). His brothers sell him to the Ishmaelites for 20 pieces of silver (c.f. Jesus is sold for 30). Recall that the Ishmaelites are their third cousins, literally, as they are the descendents of their great grandfather Abram’s first son, Ishmael. Alter, we find that the Ishmaelites are then confused for the Midianites.

In 38:6, we have a strange side story about Judah’s first-born son Er (Judah is one of Jacob’s sons), which seems to be one of our first passages from which the Rabbis derive Halakah.

In bondage in Egypt, we see how God favors Joseph. He specifically puts him over and above others (in Potiphar’s house, in prison, in Pharaoh’s house). It is in prison that Joseph first interprets the dreams of others. His interpretation is NOT based on Metaphor (as we do today), but on Simile. He does not say that the three branches are like three days, he says that the three branches *are* three days. But then we find out that Joseph attributes this kind of interpretation to God, not man. Man can only interpret according to Metaphor.

When his brothers come for food during the seven years of famine, Joseph recognizes them, but they do not recognize him. In this way, his demand that they ransom their brother Benjamin appears to them to be a cruel test of their honesty when in fact, it is designed to bring his entire family to him in Egypt. When he gives them rations, plus their money back, they interpret this as an act of punishment, since they must pay for the food they receive), but for Joseph, this is a reward. Rueben (the one brother who was against killing Joseph and suggested they sell him into slavery) declares that the brothers are being reconciled with their brother Joseph for selling him into slavery). When they leave, Joseph weeps.

In 43:23, we see how the ancients thought of religion. One's God is defined as the God of one's father.

In 45:5, after Joseph reveals who he really is to his brothers, they are worried that he will avenge himself on them by making them his slaves (Ham's curse). But again, going back to Joseph's first dream about the Sheaves, we see that he does not think about his enslavement in this way. The meaning of the Dream of the Sheaves is finally explained. Since God interprets according to Simile, the Sheaves were not his brothers bowing to him, but literal Sheaves of dying grain all traveling to the one store of grain that remains after the famine in Egypt. Joseph's power is to see what we call prophetically, that is outside of the literal reality presented before him, into the greater area of providence.

In 47:11, we have another anachronism when we see that Israel and his family settle in Goshen, "in the region of Rameses." The city of Rameses, we assume to have been built by Hebrew slaves close to the time of the Exodus.

Israel's Will to his sons ends the book of *Genesis*, after which he will be returned to Canaan to be buried with the Patriarchs.