

THE JEWISH FOUNDATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



Class XV – That’s a Wrap!

May 6, 2017

www.theologicalstraydogs.com



An Introductory Reading

Numbers 20:7 - 12 (NIV) –

“The LORD said to Moses, “Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. *Speak to that rock* before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink.

So Moses took the staff from the LORD’s presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, ‘Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?’ Then *Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice* with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank.”

An Introductory Reading

1 Corinthians 10:1 - 4 (NIV) –

“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all *under the cloud* and that they all *passed through the sea*. They were all *baptized into Moses* in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for *they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them*, and that rock was Christ.”

Where does Paul get this idea that a rock accompanied the Hebrews in the desert?

An Introductory Reading

tosefta Sukkhot 3.11 (4th c. CE) -

“And so the *well which was with the Israelites in the wilderness was a rock*, the size of a large round vessel, surging and gurgling upward, as from the mouth of this little flask, *rising with them up onto the mountains, and going down with them into the valleys.*

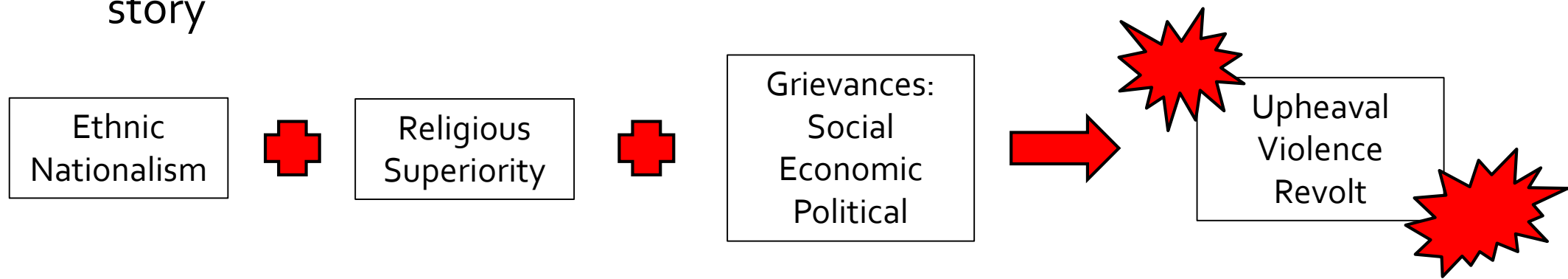
Wherever the Israelites would encamp, *it made camp with them*, on a high place, opposite the Tent of Meeting. The princes of Israel come and surround it with their staffs, and they sing a song concerning it” *Spring up, O Well! Sing to it!”*

The New Testament was not written in a vacuum – the writers addressed beliefs and ideas that were current in their time, known by their audience.

The Future of Israel

Why the increasing focus on God's redemption of the nation?

- Idealization of the monarchy period
- Dissatisfaction with current status of Roman rule
- Social pressure as minority
- Revelation of the Prophets
- Covenantal narrative worldview – not about ideas, about being part of God's story



The Future of Israel

The “age to come” would signify the *real* return from Exile and the inauguration of the complete covenant prophesied by Jeremiah (31:31-34)

“When the age to come finally arrives, those who are the true covenant members will be **vindicated**; but, if one already knows the signs and symbols which mark out those true covenant members, this vindication, this ‘justification’, *can be seen already in the present time* [author’s italics]. Covenant **faithfulness** in the present is the sign of covenantal **vindication** in the future.”

- NT Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, pg. 336

The Future of Israel

Torah references:

Jeremiah 33:15 – 16 (JPS) –

“In **those days** and at **that time**, I will raise up **a true branch of David’s line**, and he shall do what is **just and right** in the land.”

Isaiah 11:1 – 3 (JPS) –

“But a **shoot shall grow out of the stump of Jesse**, a twig shall sprout from his stock. The **spirit of the LORD shall alight** upon him: a spirit of wisdom and insight, a spirit of counsel and valor, a spirit of **devotion and reverence** for the LORD. He shall **sense the truth by his reverence** for the LORD.”

The Future of Israel

Torah references:

Numbers 24:17 – 18 (JPS) –

“A **star** rises from Jacob, a **scepter** comes forth from Israel; it **smashes** the brow of Moab, the foundation of all children of Seth. Edom becomes **a possession**, yea, Seir a possession of its enemies; but Israel is **triumphant**.”

Psalms 2:8 – 9 (JPS) -

“Ask it of me, and I will **make the nations your domain**; your estate, **the limits of the earth**. You can **smash them** with an iron mace, **shatter them** like potter’s ware.”

The Future of Israel

Torah references:

Genesis 49:10 – 12 (JPS) –

“The **scepter** shall not depart Judah,
Nor the **ruler’s staff** from between his feet;
So that **tribute shall come** to him
And the **homage of peoples** be his.”



Balaam in Numbers 24

What Did Restoration Look Like?

Whole people of Israel re-assembled

Baruch 5:5-6 (early 2nd c. CE) -

“Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height; look toward the east, and see **your children gathered** from west and east at **the word of the Holy One**, rejoicing that **God has remembered them**. For they went out from you **on foot, led away by their enemies**; but **God will bring them back** to you, carried in glory, as on a royal throne.”

War of the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness 2:2 (1st c. BCE) -

“Furthermore, 26 major officials duly assigned to service shall serve in their appointed offices; and after them there shall be **12 major Levites, one for each tribe, to serve constantly.**”

What Did Restoration Look Like?

Overthrow/subjugation of the Gentiles

***Jubilees 24:30* (2nd c. BCE) -**

“And **no remnant will be left** to them, nor one who escapes on the day of wrath of judgment; because all of the **Philistine seed** is (destined) for **destruction and uprooting and removal** from the earth.”

***Sibylline Oracles 3.616* (2nd c. BCE) –**

“And **God will speak**, with a great voice, to **the entire ignorant empty-minded people**, and **judgment will come** upon them from the great God, and **all will perish** at the hand of the Immortal...All **well-constructed walls of hostile men will fall** to the ground, because **they knew neither the law** nor the judgment of the great God, but with mindless spirit you all **launched an attack** and raised spears **against the sanctuary**.”

What Did Restoration Look Like?

Religious focus on Zion / Jerusalem with Temple rebuilt more in glorious form

1 Enoch 90:29 (1st c. BCE) –

“I went on seeing until the Lord of the sheep **brought about a new house, greater and loftier** than the first one, and set it up in the first location which had been covered up – all its **pillars were new**, the **columns new**; and the **ornaments new as well as greater** than those of the first, (that is) the old (house) which was gone.”

1 Enoch 91:13 (1st c. BCE) –

“At its completion, they shall **acquire great things** through their righteousness. **A house shall be built for the Great King** in glory forevermore.”

What Did Restoration Look Like?

Establishment of God's righteous kingdom

***Psalms of Solomon* 17:32 (1st c. BCE) –**

“And he will be a **righteous king** over them, **taught by God**. There will be **no unrighteousness among them** in his days, for **all shall be holy**, and their king shall be the Lord Messiah.”

***Jubilees* 33:20 (2nd c. BCE) –**

“...Israel is a **holy nation** to the Lord his God, and a **nation of inheritance**, and a **nation of priests**, and a **royal nation**, and a **(special) possession**.”

Who Would Lead Them?

Possible leadership figures in Intertestamental literature

Messiah: 2nd Baruch 30:1 (early 2nd c. CE) -

“And it will happen after these things when **the time of the appearance** of the **Anointed One** has been fulfilled and he returns with glory, that then **all who sleep in hope of him will rise.**”

TWO Messiahs: *The Community Rule (1QS) 9.11 (1st c. BCE) –*

“Until the coming of the Prophet and of **both the priestly and the lay Messiah**, these men are **not to depart from the clear intent of the Law** to walk in any way in the stubbornness of their own hearts. They shall judge by **the original laws** in which the members of the community **were schooled** from the beginning.”

Who Would Lead Them?

Possible leadership figures in Intertestamental literature

Son of David: *Psalms of Solomon* 17:21 – 23 (1st c. BCE) -

“See, Lord, and raise up for them **their king, the son of David**, to rule over your servant Israel **in the time known to you**, O God. Undergird him with the strength to **destroy the unrighteous rulers**, to **purge Jerusalem from gentiles** who trample her to destruction; in wisdom and in righteousness **to drive out the sinners** from the inheritance; to **smash the arrogance of sinners** like a potter’s jar.”

Who Would Lead Them?

Possible leadership figures in Intertestamental literature

Son of God: 4th Book of Ezra 13.32 – 35 (late 1st c. CE) -

“...then **my son will be revealed**, whom you saw as a man coming up from the sea. And when **all the nations** hear his voice, every man shall leave his own land and the warfare that they have against one another; and an **innumerable multitude** shall be gathered together, as you saw, **desiring to come and conquer him.**”

Elijah: Apocalypse of Elijah 5.32 (1st – 4th c. CE) –

“After these things, **Elijah and Enoch will come down**. They will lay down the flesh of the world, and they will **receive their spiritual flesh**. They will pursue **the son of lawlessness and kill him** since he is not able to speak.”

Who Would Lead Them?

Possible leadership figures in Intertestamental literature

Son of Man: – Divine figure, divine stand-in, or self-referential?

1 Enoch 69:27 – 29 (1st c. BCE) –

“And they blessed, glorified, and extolled (the Lord) on account of the fact that the name of **that Son of Man was revealed** to them. He shall **never pass away or perish** from before the face of the earth...for that **Son of Man has appeared and has seated himself** upon the throne of his glory.”

Who Would Lead Them?

Historical examples of revolutionary figures

- Judas the Galilean – 4 BCE
- The Samaritan prophet – 36 CE
- Theudas – 46 CE
- The Egyptian – ca. 50s CE
- Simon bar Giora – 68 CE
- Simeon bar Kochba (“son of the star”) – 135 CE



The Early Church's Response

Early church's picture of Jesus uses the figures of the period to explain who Jesus is

- *Christos* = "Anointed One" = Messiah
- *Son of David*
- *Son of God*

Also used these as touchstones for what Jesus is **NOT**

- **NOT** the magician of *Gospel of Thomas*
- **NOT** the created being of Arianism



The Early Church's Response

Church rejected the religious/ethnic nationalism of Palestinian Judaism

Paul: Galatians 3:28 (NIV) – “There is **neither Jew nor Greek...**”

Apostle John: John 12:20-23 (NIV) – “...there were **some Greeks...**and Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man **to be glorified.**”

Apostle Peter: Acts 11:47 (NIV) – “Can anyone **keep these people** from being baptized with water? They have **received the Holy Spirit** just as we have.”

Gospels: Matthew 23:35 – 38 (NIV) – “And so **upon you will come** all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth...I tell you the truth, **all this** will come **upon this generation...**Look, your house is left to you **desolate.**”

Effects on the Early Church

- Christianity originally seen as an offshoot of Judaism – good and bad:
 - Good:
 - **Special status** of Judaism in the past (via Julius Caesar, then revoked by Emperor Claudius)
 - **Built-in** audience and social structure
 - **Scriptures** normative for revelation
 - Bad:
 - Is Judaism/Christianity **open or closed** to outsiders?
 - Should Gentile Christians also follow **Jewish ethnic customs**?
 - Who are **Abraham's** children?

Effects on the Early Church

- By end of 1st c. CE, **definitive separation** between the church and Judaism
 - 18 Benedictions – “prayer against **heretics and slanderers**”
 - **Hints** of the separation in the Gospels – Matt. 23:33 - 34
 - Growth of the **Gentile** church
 - **Jewish rebellions** (66 & 135 CE) created major changes in Judaism
 - Blew up cultural religious expectations – **faith not tied to ethnicity**
- By the time of the Christian apologist Justin Martyr (d. 165 CE), the church **explicitly counseled against** keeping Jewish dietary restrictions, etc. due to separate religious identity and focus on Christ

How Does This Change How I Read Scripture?

- Be aware of **cultural assumptions** (ours and theirs)
 - What would a 1st c. person think about this?
 - What is the author trying to say? Why put this here?
- Recognize **wonderful multiplicity** of voices:
 - Hebrews not the same as Luke / Acts
- Read in the cultural **margins**
 - **Not either/or** – Judaism or Hellenism
 - Pendulum has swung back to default to Judaism, but more complex
 - Stories of a Palestinian Jew in a multicultural context written in Greek
- **Beware** those who claim historical hegemony

Thank You!

- Why do we care about the background of the Bible?
 - **Context** – biblical interpretation is grounded in the original audience
 - **Submission** to the Word – danger of reading our own anachronisms into Scripture
 - **Worship** of God - called to worship with our whole being, including the mind

Simeon ben Gamaliel said:

“All my days have I grown up among the Sages and I have found nothing better for a man than **silence**; and not expounding [of the Law] is the chief thing but the doing [of it]; and he that multiplies words occasions sin.”

- Aboth 1.17