

Lecture 7b: Pentateuch

Selected Texts

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Genesis

- Genesis 1-11: Primordial History
 - Creation of the universe
 - The shape of the first human beings
 - The story of the first human beings in the Garden of Eden and the Temptation
 - Cain and Abel
 - The Flood
 - The Tower of Babel
- Genesis 12-50: The History and the Patriarchs
 - The Patriarchs are the founders of the Nation of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
 - Jacob's Twelve Children, among which is Joseph

Genesis 1-3: Creation, Adam and Eve

- Two accounts of Creation
 - Genesis 1: The Priestly Account (ca. 5th Century BC)
 - Genesis 2: The Yahwistic Account (represents the oldest account ca. 8th Century BC)
- Differences:
 - Genesis 1, God is a powerful King in Heaven ordering things to come into creation. He created ex nihilo (out of nothing) and does it by the power of His Word. He doesn't move from heaven or descend on earth, but He commands and everything appears.
 - Genesis 2, God takes dust from the ground, makes man, breathes to make him a living being.
 - In Genesis 1, God is transcendent (transcends the material universe) and in Genesis 2, God is imminent (working inside the material universe)
 - In Genesis 1, God is a deliberator ("Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness") - according to Jewish interpretation, God is talking to His angels. In Genesis 2, God is like a potter Who shapes humanity from the ground. He is not deliberating, He is doing.
 - Each account gives us something about God and they complement each other

- The Creation of Humanity in Three Steps
 - God took dust out of the ground and created humanity (Adam - not specifically a man or a woman)
 - God takes this humanity and places it in the Garden of Eden (Garden of Delight)
 - God fashions Eve (woman) and brings her to the humanity (Adam) - This is a woman, taken from a man. And there is a unity between them - marriage.
- Genesis 3 - The Fall of Man
 - God planted many trees including the Tree of Life, and in the middle of the garden, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (knowing everything) and He commanded Adam and Eve not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil
 - They were not tempted to eat from the Tree of Life (immortality and living forever) but rather in the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil (power and control - even at the expense of transgressing the commandment of God)
 - God takes them out of the garden so that they do not eat from the Tree of Life and live forever in this depravity. He gives them an opportunity to have a limited number of years (mortality)
 - Death has entered into the world

Genesis 4:1-16: Cain and Abel

- God looks favorably at the offering of Abel, but not that of Cain. Cain becomes angry and God tells him "if you did something good, be happy" but Cain goes and kills his brother

Genesis 12: Call of Abraham

- Abraham living in Ur of Chaldea and with his family is journeying north toward Syria and establish themselves in the region of Haran
- God calls Abraham to follow Him in a different country; Abraham left everything and followed God
- Follow God to Canaan (modern day Israel/Palestine)
- He received from God a threefold promise: the first Covenant between God and Israel - represented by Abraham.
 - Abraham will become the father of a great nation
 - Abraham's offspring will inherit the land of Canaan
 - In Abraham, all the nations will be blessed by God
 - Interpreted by Christian interpreters as the Gentiles embracing Christ and His teachings, and becoming His disciples.

Genesis 18: The Three Heavenly Visitors

- In one of the days Abraham spent in Canaan, he receives the visit of three heavenly visitors whom he identifies one with the noun: Adonai (my Lord)
- The three visitors were God (Yahweh) and two angels

Genesis 22: The Sacrifice of Isaac

- God puts Abraham to the test, to see if he is an obedient servant.
- Abraham does not contest God or fight back - he takes Isaac and two servants and sets off for a long journey (3 days) to a mountain called Moriah. At the mountain, Abraham is ready to sacrifice his son, Isaac, but when he is about to kill him, God stops him from heaven and tells him to sacrifice a ram instead.
- It is a story about a father who loved his son, who is obedient to God, and a story about God who tests his servants
- Theological Story: Explicative story to show us why Ancient Israelites didn't offer human beings as sacrifices - all the other Canaanite nations were sacrificing human sacrifices to their gods, except for Israel (because of this episode with Abraham).

Genesis 28: Jacob's Dream at Bethel

- Between Abraham and Jacob, we have the patriarch Isaac who had two sons - Jacob and Esau.
- Jacob stole the birthright from Esau for a soup... Esau is trying to kill Jacob because he felt humiliated.
- Jacob's mother asks him to leave the Promised Land (Canaan) and to go to her relatives in Haran (northern part of Mesopotamia).
- During this journey, Jacob stops at a place called Bethel (house of God) and had a dream. He saw something raised (i.e. ladder) uniting earth to heaven. On top of that raised ladder, Jacob saw God Himself.
- This ladder means that God will provide an intermediary between heaven and earth, between God and man.
 - Ancient Christian interpreters saw in this ladder a symbol of Christ who is human and divine at the same time, and he is the true intermediary between God and man.
 - Another interpretation is that the ladder is the Theotokos St Mary. Some icons show St Mary at the top of the ladder representing the ladder as being the unity between heaven and earth.

Genesis 37, 39: Joseph and His Brothers; Joseph and Potiphar's Wife

- Joseph is one of the 12 sons of the patriarch Jacob. Joseph is smart and wise, but his brothers sell him to some Ishmaelites going to Egypt, and they sold him to Potiphar. Joseph becomes slave in Potiphar's house for a number of days.
- Potiphar's wife comes to Joseph and asks him to sleep with her - he refused. Because of this, she accuses him in front of Potiphar for bringing shame on his house. Joseph is sold in a dungeon/prison.
- Joseph meets the baker and cupbearer of Pharaoh in prison. He prophesies about the fates of these two, and for this he was released later on.
- Pharaoh makes him vizier because he is wise.
- Joseph's brothers came to Egypt, but could not recognize him. But he was not vindictive or seeking revenge, but he held them, gave them food to survive.
- The lesson of this story is that God provided - God made everything possible for the people of Israel to survive and become the people of the Messiah.

Exodus

Exodus 1-3: Moses

- Birth of Moses, Moses growing up and having the revelation of God at the burning bush
- After the death of Jacob and Joseph, and the death of the Pharaoh who knew Joseph, another Pharaoh came who did not know them and did not like the rate at which the Israelites were growing as a people. So he ordered the killing of newborn Hebrew babies. Moses was born during this time.
- Moses' mother put him in a basket in the Nile, and he was found by the daughter of Pharaoh who had mercy on him and kept him as her own
- When Moses grew up, he took sides in an argument with a Hebrew and killed the Egyptian oppressor, and from then he had to flee.
- He went to Midian where he encountered his wife, Zipporah, the daughter of the priest Reul.
- Moses reached a place called the Mountain of God and had a vision of a burning bush that was burning constantly without being consumed by fire. He approached it and heard the revelation of God.
- God told him to go back to Egypt, talk to Pharaoh to liberate the people of Israel. Moses asked what God "if they ask who sent you, what do they say?" and God tells him His name: I AM - Yahweh - The One Who Is.

Exodus 12: Passover

- Moses went to Pharaoh, Pharaoh is reluctant, and God has to bring over Egypt ten plagues. The last one is the death of the firstborn of the Egyptians.
- Moses received a commandment from God to take a lamb, slay the lamb, and put the blood on the Hebrew doorposts. That way, when the angel of death came through, he would pass over the houses with the blood of the lamb. Ancient Christian interpreters said that the doorposts and lintel were in the shape of the Cross

Exodus 14-15: Crossing the Red Sea

- The biggest miracle of all time in the Old Testament
- After plague 10, the Israelites left Egypt, but the Egyptians followed them
- When they got to the Red Sea, God performed a miracle for them and split the Red Sea, so that the Israelites could cross on dry ground.
- When the Israelites tried to follow them, the Red Sea was brought back down on them and they die
- This miracle is comparable to the Resurrection in the New Testament (in terms of impact, significance)
- Exodus 15 is the Song of Moses, representing one of the oldest texts in the Hebrew Bible

Exodus 19-20, 24: The Sinai Covenant

- God made a covenant with Abraham which was a one-way covenant - God is promising good things to Abraham without asking Abraham to do anything. This Covenant with the Israelites is the real one - two-way covenant.
- The intermediary is Moses, and the Covenant is done on Mt Sinai
 - Fire, smoke, mountain is shaking, voices being heard, etc. was a sign that God descended on Mt Sinai
- God gives to Moses the two stones with the ten commandments.
- The elders go up with Moses on Mt Sinai and they saw the celestial and luminous body of God (Exodus 24)

Exodus 33: Moses' Intercession and God's Face/Glory

- The apex of Moses' life, near the end of his life, he had one big wish that he expressed to God - please show me Your face/glory. God said no one can see My face and live. But He put Moses in a rock and passed by him and let Moses see His back.
- We will never know God in His essence - it will always be a mystery to us. But we will see Him in His characteristics, and in the face of His Son.

Exodus 34: Yahweh's Self-Introduction

- "5 Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. 6 And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing *the guilty*, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation."
- God is, on the one hand, merciful. And on the other hand, He hates sin and does not want sin to persist and live.

Leviticus

Leviticus 8-10: Priesthood

- There are some similarities between Ancient Israelite priesthood and the Christian priesthood

Leviticus 16: Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)

- Sometimes called the Day of Reconciliation, or Day of Becoming One; the appropriate English name would be: Day of Concealment/Day of Hiding
- Parallels Good Friday in Christianity
- Israelites are called by the priests of the temple to bring two goats - one to be sacrificed, and the blood was taken by the High Priest into the Holy of Holies (the only day of the year that it can be entered), and the High Priest takes the blood to purify with it the Ark of Covenant.
- The Ark preserved three items:

- Manna
- Ten Commandments on Stone Tablets
- The Rod of Aaron
- The second goat was not killed, but the High Priest lays his hands on the head of the living goat and confessing all the sins of the people of Israel committed that year. Then a man was sent with the living goat to the wilderness to bring the defiled goat (i.e. carrying all the sins of the people) to Azazel (scapegoat)
- The sins are not forgiven or deleted, they are only removed from inhabited places like Jerusalem and the cities.
 - In the New Testament, one of the first miracles Jesus performs is the healing of the paralytic in Capernaum. And instead of saying "arise from your mattress" He says: "Your sins are forgiven." - and the Jews started to bicker about it because only God has the power to eradicate or delete or forgive sins.
 - The Jewish belief is that one day, the Messiah would have the power to delete sin
 - When Jesus then says "rise, take up your bed and walk" then they have no choice to believe that He has power to forgive sins

Leviticus 23: Appointed Festivals

Numbers

Numbers 6: Priestly Benediction

- And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: ²³ "Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:
²⁴ "The Lord bless you and keep you;
²⁵ The Lord make His face shine upon you,
 And be gracious to you;
²⁶ The Lord ^[e]lift up His countenance upon you,
 And give you peace." '

²⁷ "So they shall ^[f]put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them."

Numbers 21: The Bronze Serpent

- Israelites during the 40 year-sojourn toward the Promised Land started to bicker towards Moses - "You brought us out of Egypt, we had food enough and drink enough, and now in this desert we hunger and thirst."
- God sent serpents to bite the Israelites and they started to die - Moses went to God and asked what to do.
- God told him to take his staff, and put on it a Bronze Serpent... and those who look at the Bronze Serpent will be healed and will not die and this is what happened.
- The staff is seen in Christian interpretation as the Cross, and the Bronze Serpent as the Lord Jesus Christ (a good serpent) bringing salvation and healing.

Numbers 22-24: Prophet Balaam

- Balaam is a prophet originally from Mesopotamia (not Israelite). He is called by a king from Canaan to curse the people of Israel - they have ended their long journey and are about to enter Canaan. This king, Balak, feared them and called Balaam and offered to pay him to curse them
- Balaam, when he came to curse them, he was approached by God. And God told Balaam to bless them - and he did.
- Balaam is delivering a promise: "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel" - a Messianic Prophecy.

Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 6: The Great Commandment (Shema Israel "Hear, O Israel")

- Jesus was asked by one of the scribes "what is the greatest commandment?"
 - Jesus said: "Love your God with all your soul, mind and heart and the second one like it, love your neighbor as yourself."
 - Both commandments are found in the Old Testament, and encompass the entirety of the Laws and commandments
 - Loving our creator | vertical relation
Loving our neighbor --- horizontal relation
Makes a Cross
- ⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord *is* one! ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.
 - For Jews, it is as important as the Lord's prayer is for Christians
- Even until today, the Christian Creed (Nicene Creed): "We believe in one God"

Deuteronomy 7: A Chosen People

Deuteronomy 29: Covenant Renewed in Moab

Deuteronomy 33-34: Moses' Blessings and Death

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