

Introduction to the Apocrypha

Torah in Motion

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Class 2: The History of the Second Temple Period II

Overview

The Concept of Canon and the Latest Biblical Material

What were Greeks and Romans Writing About Jews?

The Latest Texts in the Hebrew Bible

a) Zechariah 14:

16 Then all who survive of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year by year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the festival of booths. ¹⁷If any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain upon them. ¹⁸And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then on them shall come the plague that the Lord inflicts on the nations that do not go up to keep the festival of booths. ¹⁹Such shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to keep the festival of booths.

20 On that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, 'Holy to the Lord.' And the cooking-pots in the house of the Lord shall be as holy as the bowls in front of the altar; ²¹and every cooking-pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the Lord of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and use them to boil the flesh of the sacrifice. And there shall no longer be traders in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day.

b) Isaiah 66:

²² For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your descendants and your name remain. ²³ From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord.

24 And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

c) Daniel 7:

In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream: ²I, Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, ³and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. ⁴The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then, as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it. ⁵Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks in its mouth among its teeth and was told, 'Arise, devour many bodies!' ⁶After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it. ⁷After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten

horns. °I was considering the horns, when another horn appeared, a little one coming up among them; to make room for it, three of the earlier horns were plucked up by the roots. There were eyes like human eyes in this horn, and a mouth speaking arrogantly. (NRSV)

d) 2 Chronicles 36:

22 In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfilment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: ²³‘Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the Lord his God be with him! Let him go up.’

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Anti-Jewish Literature in the Greek and Roman Periods

a) Josephus, *Against Apion*, I.228–252: Manetho

I refer to Manetho. This writer, who had undertaken to translate the history of Egypt from the sacred books, began by stating that our ancestors came against Egypt with many tens of thousands and gained the mastery over the inhabitants; and then he himself admitted that at a later date again they were driven out of the country, occupied what is now Judea, founded Jerusalem, and built the temple...he took the liberty of interpolating improbably tales in his desire to confuse with us a crowd of Egyptians, who for leprosy and other maladies had been condemned, he says, to banishment from Egypt.

b) Josephus, *Against Apion*, II.79–96: Apollonius Molon

I am no less amazed at the proceedings of the authors who supplied him with his materials, I mean Posidonius and Apollonius Molon. On the one hand, they charge us with not worshipping the same gods as other people; on the other, they tell lies and invent absurd calumnies about our temple, without showing any consciousness of impiety. Yet to high-minded men nothing is more disgraceful than a lie, of any description, but above all on the subject of a temple of world-wide fame and commanding sanctity. Within this sanctuary Apion has the effrontery to assert that the Jews kept an ass’s head, worshipping that animal and deeming it worthy of the deepest reverence; the fact was disclosed, he maintains, on the occasion of the spoliation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, when the head, made of gold and worth a high price, was discovered...

He adds a second story, about Greeks, which is a malicious slander upon us from beginning to end...

He asserts that Antiochus found in the temple a couch, on which a man was reclining, with a table before him laden with a banquet of fish of the sea, beasts of the earth, and birds of the air, at which the poor fellow was gazing in stupefaction. The king’s entry was instantly hailed by him with adoration, as about to procure him profound relief; falling at the king’s knees, he stretched out his right hand and implored him to set him free. The king reassured him and bade him tell who he was, why he was living there, what was the meaning of his abundant fare. Thereupon, with sighs and tears, the man, in a pitiful tone, told the tale of his distress. He said, Apion continues, that he was a Greek and that, while travelling about the province for a livelihood, he was suddenly kidnapped by men of a foreign race and conveyed to the temple; there he was shut up and seen by nobody, but was fattened on feasts of the most lavish description. At first these unlooked for attentions deceived him and caused him pleasure; suspicious followed, then consternation. Finally, on consulting the attendants who waited upon him, he heard of the unutterable law of the Jews, for the sake of which he was being fed. The practice was repeated annually at a fixed season. They would kidnap a Greek foreigner, fatten him for a year, and then convey him to a wood, where they slew him, sacrificed his body with their customary ritual, partook of his flesh, and, while immolating the Greek, swore an oath of hostility to the Greeks the remains of their victim were then thrown into a pit. The man (Apion continues) stated that he had now but a few days left to live, and implored the king, out of respect for the gods of Greece, to defeat this Jewish plot upon his life-blood

and to deliver him from his miserable predicament.

c) Josephus, *Against Apion*, II.145, 148: Apollonius Molon

Apollonius, unlike Apion, has not grouped his accusations together, but scattered them here and there all over his work, reviling us in one place as atheists and misanthropes, in another reproaching us as cowards, whereas elsewhere, on the contrary, he accuses us of temerity and reckless madness. He adds that we are the most witless of all barbarians, and are consequently the only people who have contributed no useful invention to civilization.

d) Josephus, *Against Apion*, II.236, 255–258: Apollonius Molon

Of these facts Apollonius Molon took no account when he condemned us for refusing admission to persons with other preconceived ideas about God, and for declining to associate with those who have chosen to adopt a different mode of life...

If, however, it is seen that no one observes them better than ourselves, and if we have shown that we were the first to discover them, then the Apions and Molons and all who delight in lies and abuse may be left to their own confusion.

e) Josephus, *Against Apion*: Cicero

There follows the odium that is attached to Jewish gold. This is no doubt the reason why this case is being tried not far from the Aurelian Steps. You procured this place and that crowd, Laelius, for this trial. You know what a big crowd it is, how they stick together, how influential they are in informal assemblies. So I will speak in a low voice so that only the jurors may hear; for those are not wanting who would incite them against me and against every respectable man. I shall not help them to do this more easily. When every year it was customary to send gold to Jerusalem on the order of the Jews from Italy and from all our provinces, Flaccus forbade by an edict its exportation from Asia. Who is there, gentleman, who could not honestly praise this action? The senate often earlier and also in my consulship most urgently forbade the export of gold. But to resist this barbaric superstition was an act of firmness, to defy the crowd of Jews when sometimes in our assemblies they were hot with passion, for the welfare of the state was an act of the greatest seriousness.

f) Josephus, *Against Apion*, I.304–311: Lysimachus

I will next introduce Lysimachus. He brings up the same theme as the writers just mentioned, the mendacious story of the lepers and crippled, but surpasses both in the incredibility of his fictions, obviously composed with bitter animus. His account is this: In the reign of Bocchoris, king of Egypt, the Jewish people, who were afflicted with leprosy, scurvy, and other maladies, took refuge in the temples and lived a mendicant existence. The victims of disease being very numerous, a dearth ensued throughout Egypt...

