

Notes on the Readings Assigned for October 6

New Testament

Diversity of Groups in First Century Judaism (1-2)

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Essenes of Qumran

Separatists claiming sole access to truth

Origin of the Dead Sea Scrolls

Pharisees

Bad Press in New Testament: Pictured as primary opponents of Jesus

Scholarly, meticulous observers of ancestral law

Expertise in Torah

Sadducees --Rejected the authority of the "Great tradition"

Rejected the resurrection of the dead

Zealot/Sicarii -- Religious beliefs lead to political agenda

Lots of Jews did not belong to any formal movement or party.

Fredricksen

Josephus is our main source about the diversity within first century Judaism

There is a question about his reliability.

Sadducees focused on running the temple

Pharisees focused on Biblical interpretation

Essenes focused on purity rituals

from their own documents we know they were apocalyptic

For the most part Philo and Josephus describe them in terms which would make sense to a Roman man: the Essenes as a "philosophic community."

White

New religious texts and practices in first century It is only 100 years since the feast of Hanukkah was established

For the most part no absolute boundaries between varieties of Judaism: one could be both a Priest and a Pharisee, for instance

Cohen

Josephus -- one God, one temple. Temple plays role of unifying tradition in Jewish community

But the Temple was also a source of conflict. The Temple as something all groups within Judaism related to, but with varying agendas

The emergence of Rabbinic Judaism in the 2nd century parallels the Christian process of self-definition

The Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls (1-3)

Geographic and physical conditions at Khirbet Qumran

Story of the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls

Types of Literary material discovered

- A. Actual books of the Hebrew Scriptures
- B. Commentaries on Biblical Texts
 - The Isaiah Scroll
- C. Sectarian Documents
 - The Manual of Discipline (Rule for the Community's Life)
 - The War Scroll (Apocalyptic Battle Plan)
 - The Copper Scroll

Essene Identity

- A. Abandon Jerusalem in protest at the way the Temple was being run
- B. Flee into the desert to "prepare the way of the Lord" See Isaiah 40:3
- C. Apocalyptic orientation
 - See selves as the true religion/ chosen ones/ righteous remnant
- D. Separatists from the rest of the Jewish community
- E. The end of the present evil age is inexorable
- F. Concern with being on the right side during the last judgment
- G. God will establish a new Kingdom for the Jews
- H. For Essenes, the End Time does not → the end of the physical universe, but of the present era/aeon of world history

Eschatology It's a word to know.

Messiah It's another word to know.

- G. Messiah as an agent involved in the coming Kingdom of God
 - Belief in a coming Messiah not universal in first century Judaism
 - Qumran, however, believed in two Messiahs: The Messiah of David

who was a kingly figure and war leader and the Messiah of Aaron, a priestly figure who would restore proper worship.

There is no evidence that either Jesus or John the Baptist were Essenes

Cohen's Comments

The Essenes believed their community to be a surrogate temple. Their community, not Jerusalem, was holy and obeying the rules.

Apocalyptic scenarios from Qumran documents highly varied (raises question as to whether they were understood literally)

See the Scroll "The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness"
Everybody but the Essenes are the "Sons of Darkness"

Community Definition in the 'Manual of Discipline'

- A. Community is isolated from other (corrupting?) sorts of Judaism
- B. Hierarchic
- C. Monastic (no or very little private property)
- D. No women (Community of Adult males)

Essenes show that the range of possibilities within first century Judaism was far greater than we had thought.

Galilee (1-4)

Callahan

Description of Galilee in first half of the first century

- A. Political tinderbox: An area with a history of being a contested, border area with a mixed population
- B. Northern Palestine traditionally held an idea that Israel was not a kingdom but a loose tribal confederacy ruled by God.
- C. Callahan sees this tradition of autonomy stretching down into the time of Jesus
- D. Autonomy manifested in the “bandits” for which 1st century Galilee was well known
- E. Charismatic leaders from Galilee were frequently suppressed by the Roman military

Meyers

1. Galilee a center of Jewish learning in the 2nd and 3rd centuries ACE/AD
2. Geography of Galilee:
 - a. The Jordan Rift (Great Rift valley)
 - b. Mt Hermon
 - c. Upper and Lower Galilee
 - Upper Galilee -- rural, remote, treacherous terrain, high hills
 - Lower Galilee -- 2 major cities: Sepphoris, Tiberius. Both founded by Herod Antipas

Upper Galilee -- strict about second commandment,
Lower Galilee more flexible

Geography of Lower Galilee: Sea of Galilee on East, Mediterranean on the West

Political Status of Galilee at time of Jesus: Client kingdom ruled by one of Herod the Great's sons, place of internal class struggle

3. Roman response of charismatic leaders

John the Baptist (1-5)

White

- A. Two Sources about John: The New Testament Gospels and Josephus
- B. Josephus sees John as an ascetic eccentric
- C. Seems to be in the classic prophetic tradition: a critic of society calling for change, for a renewal of Jewish piety, for being right with God.
- D. Numerous groups within Judaism practice baptism/ritual washing

White identifies baptism as originating in washing before temple worship. But shortly before time of Jesus temple practice expanded into practice of private piety.

Baptism was not a once for all event, but the sign of a rededicated life. Therefore it could be repeated.

Crossan

Baptism of Jesus by John as certain as anything we know about Jesus (Why is this true? [J.G.]

The baptism of the Messiah/Son of God posed problem of authority for the early Christians. It → the acceptance by Jesus of John's authority and, therefore, a subordination.

John's message: the immanence of the Kingdom of God

The difference between John the Baptist and Jesus:

John believes the solution to the world's problems requires catastrophic divine intervention

Jesus -- God places the demand on us to respond to evil (ethical eschatology)

Attridge

Asks question: How accurate is the relation between Jesus and John as pictured in the New Testament? Is John a self-conscious and deliberate forerunner of Jesus? Or is this picture a construction of the later church?

John's baptism is not the joining of a society, but an expression of repentance in the face of immanent judgment

Death of John the Baptist

Killed on account of criticism of Herod Antipas We don't know if his death has an impact on the ministry of Jesus

The Jewish Diaspora (1-7)

White

Diaspora -- the dispersal of Jewish population throughout the Roman Empire. Major Jewish communities located in all urban centers of the Roman Empire and even beyond it

Challenges to Diaspora Communities

1. Identity maintenance -- avoidance of assimilation with neighbors
2. Variation in treatment from city to city -- difficult to frame a set of universal rules for all circumstances
3. Permissible degree of accommodation to Hellenistic culture

Adoption of the Greek language (Need for translation of scriptures into Greek)

Paul's quotations from the Old Testament are not from the Hebrew text, but from the Greek text

Synagogue as a diaspora institution

Ostia Synagogue excavation discovers:

1. Exterior indistinguishable from other buildings of neighborhood.

Distinguishing symbols in the interior

2. Located outside the gate of the town (in the sub-urbs where the newcomers are found and at some distance from the civic center and the locus of

traditional power

3. Synagogue consists of entrance hall, assembly room, kitchen and dining area
4. Excavations of synagogue burial grounds show a population of mixed speakers. Some still primarily Aramaic, most Greek, a few Latin

“Mothers and Fathers of the synagogue”

Cohen

Strabo's comments: contemporary awareness of the diaspora

Early Christian diffusion follows the Jewish diffusion pattern: The Diaspora paves the way for Christian expansion

Synagogue as a place of gathering and assembly

A part of community organization (not just a place of worship)

Center for the discussion of all community issues (that's why kitchen and assembly hall)

Reading and interpretation of sacred texts (identity maintenance and education)

Paul routinely taught his perspective on the sacred text in the synagogues of the dispersion

Gentiles in the synagogue -- there is nothing equivalent to the communal synagogue experience in the pagan religious world i.e. it may have been the communal rather than the strictly religious aspects of the synagogue which attracted pagan participation

Fredricksen

Outside of Palestine isn't "home" to Jews of diaspora, even if the Jews had lived in a particular spot for generations.

Calendar/Festivals/Sabbath observance binds the diaspora communities together

Apocalypticism (1-8)

Fredriksen

Between 200 BCE and 200 ACE sees development of beliefs in Judaism that God will intervene in history to make sure that good triumphs over evil

All sorts of different descriptions of what this triumph will look like. Frequently pictured as a battle of good and evil. Frequently the overcoming of evil is signaled by the restoration of some lost good: the resurrection of the dead, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the refurbishing of the temple

History as we know it signals the failure of God -- so for God to succeed requires an intervention on his part from outside the historical process to correct it.

Apocalyptic writings scattered through the diaspora, broadly characteristic of Jewish culture of the time.

Story of Caligula and his statues in the Jerusalem temple -- point is that when things get so unthinkable bad that one cannot imagine anything worse if one believes thoroughly in a moral God, one expects that God to intervene to right the situation → apocalyptic

Note that apocalyptic connects religion and politics

Josephus -- Our Primary Source (1-9)

White

Josephus -- a Jew native to Palestine and contemporary to the events of first century Judaism.

Involved in the First Jewish Revolt against Rome and, therefore, his history of the revolt is an eye-witness account.

Two major books: The Antiquities of the Jews and The Jewish War

As an historian, he embellishes, as is typical of most ancient historians. He is also writing to justify his change of sides in the Jewish revolt. Therefore his reliability is contested on numerous points

Meyers

Complexity of Josephus turns on his change of sides during the revolt against Rome. He's eventually sponsored by the Roman Empire and finishes writing his history subsidized by the Emperor

Jews and the Roman Empire 1-10

1. Roman expansion partly military, partly due to the attraction of other communities to the stability Rome offered.
2. Importance of Roman economic penetration to the expansion of Roman power and culture.
3. Roman use of “client kings” Herod the Great of Palestine a classic example.
4. Fate of Herod’s kingdom: divided into three portions, one for each of his sons. Archelaus, the son who received Judea, was removed by the Romans and his portion, Judea, was placed under the rule of procurators appointed by the emperor.
5. The value of Herod’s rebuilding of the Temple to his vision of the Jewish State. Herod’s building program as designed to create unity and provide economic relief after the earthquake of 31 AD.
6. Palestinian economy: expanding at the time of Jesus. Roman trade and Herod’s building projects
7. The Temple as a factor in religious-social tensions.
8. Josephus’s picture of the state of things in Palestine 60-66 (outbreak of Jewish Revolt)
 - A. Abusive and corrupt Roman officials
 - B. Increasing influence of Zealotry
 - C. Immediate origin of the war: Demand that the temple treasury be used to reimburse gentiles who lost property and lives in Jewish riot.
9. Outline of the First Jewish Revolt
 - A. Roman response comes in two stages: Northern and Southern. The first is concerned with Galilee, the second with Judea.
 - B. Vespasian’s strategy: Isolate Jerusalem and reconquer country one unit at a time
 - C. Interruption in his plans created by the assassination of Nero
 - D. Titus (son of Vespasian) conquers Jerusalem and the city is sacked (archeological evidence confirms historical document.)
10. Sack of Jerusalem creates a religious trauma. If we are the chosen people why isn’t it more apparent?
11. Destruction of the Temple causes a shift of religious focus – from Temple to Torah.

12. Masada: Former fortress and palace of Herod the Great

Story is told in Josephus, but is difficult to interpret

Josephus's account is in tension with archeological evidence

Modern Jewish/anti-Jewish feeling in Near East influences interpretation of evidence

Position of suicide in Josephus reflects Graeco-Roman belief structures rather than Jewish

13. 2nd Jewish revolt (Bar Kockba Revolt) illustrates the importance of messianic expectations

This revolt forces the issue between Christianity as a sub-section of Judaism and the rest of the Jewish community (bar Kockba can't be the Messiah because we already have one)
Christian – Jewish split finalized.

Temple Culture (1-12)

Cohen

Only one Jewish Temple in time of Jesus, the one in Jerusalem.

Herod the Great greatly expanded the Temple complex and it became the center of a major tourist trade

Temple functionaries (priests) were all members of a single extended family, performed the sacrificial functions taking place in the process of worship inside the temple.

Approach to heart of temple possible only for priests, Jews can get close, but not in and gentiles are restricted to an area even more remote from the Temple center

Nature of Temple worship a bit strange to us -- priests actually offered the animal and offeror didn't participate directly in the sacrifices -- only in subsequent feasts

Role of Temple in Jewish society huge -- most sacred place on earth, connection of earth and heaven

Fredriksen

Description of idea function of the Temple contained in the Torah -- what is sacrificed by whom and when.

Three kinds of offerings: Animal, cereal, and liquid (wine, olive oil)

Other temple activities: chanting of psalms by Levites, people praying.

In Diaspora communities, the temple becomes an interior reality, since they hear of how it works in the reading of Torah on the Sabbath. (Origin of much later Jewish spirituality)

Temple organized in terms of concentric increasingly sacred spaces. Gentiles and women in outermost sacred space, Jews in the next and priests only in the innermost. Key idea is that gentiles were not barred from making offerings and participating in temple culture. Note that even gentile offerings went into the most sacred areas of the Temple on gentiles' behalf. (This becomes important later in understanding Jesus as sacrifice offered to God on behalf of the Gentiles.)

Pilgrimage Festivals: Passover

Festival of national liberation, opportunity for a party

Notion of Purity (Pay attention to it, its extremely important!) Distinguish between purity and moral behavior

Impurity is a normal condition. The law is structured to allow people to move out of impurity and into purity so as to be able to approach God.

Rituals of purification as remedy for condition of impurity

Water as a means of purification

Sacrificing of Passover lamb in state of purity very important --not just purity of the person offering the lamb, but of the lamb itself, the family of the man making the offering, the priest who received the lamb for sacrifice, etc. So Passover is a complex, difficult, time of great activity

Huge arguments over the correct way to conduct Temple sacrifice and other aspects of Temple life.

White

Temple as showplace/tourist attraction -- intentional on the part of Herod the Great. Public works program, international prestige, center of Jewish life and pride.

Pharisees and Sadducees in their relation to priests. Note the political tension between Pharisees and Sadducees