

Endings/W05

Reading and Writing Assignment for Monday, Jan. 24: The Deuteronomistic Theory of History

Reading (note - there are changes here from what the syllabus lists):

Bible: Numbers 25.1-9; Deuteronomy 4.1-40; 28.1-68; Joshua 2.1-24; 5.13 to 7.26; 10.1-43; 23.1 to 24.31.
Harris: pp. 159-172. Again, this is full of good stuff but not all of it applies. See his excellent summary of Deuteronomy's philosophy of history, pg. 160.

Writing:

Most of these questions have very quick answers. I will be collecting these. Like Tracy (I'll try it!), I will accept group answers, but they have to be ready to hand in on Friday. Make sure the name of each person who contributed is on the sheet.

1. Numbers 25.1-9: The Book of Numbers concerns events during the Israelites' travels through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land of Canaan. In the course of these travels, they continually fall away from YHWH; the Golden Calf episode was by no means the end of that straying. What does this section imply is wrong with Israelites' having sexual relations with Moabites?
2. Deuteronomy 4.1-8: (a) what does Moses say is special about Israel? (b) what is the big sin Moses warns against here (forgive the obviousness of this question)? (c) Although there is no evidence outside the Bible of Moses's existence, scholars set the year for his leading the Israelites out of Egypt at approximately 1250 B.C.E. That's when he would be saying the words attributed to him in Deuteronomy 4.1-40 and elsewhere. The Babylonian Exile was 700 years later, around 580 B.C.E. At Deuteronomy 4.25-31, Moses seems to predict the Babylonian Exile. How does the important footnote at the beginning of this section, 4.1-40, explain this?
3. Deuteronomy 28.1-68: (a) What is the ratio of rewards for obedience to punishment for disobedience? Now will you behave? Now will you stay away from those seduction zones Tracy was talking about? (b) According to the footnote introducing this section, what non-biblical writing does this collection of blessings and curses resemble? Finally (and most important for us), (c) which of the curses are most "apocalyptic" in nature that is, which predict the kinds of things we've encountered in Daniel?
4. Joshua 2.1-24: Joshua is a bloody book about the Israelites' conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua, who is presented as a second Moses-plus-military-prowess. This short section prepares for the next assigned section. It's about the prostitute Rahab helping the Israelite spies. In this section, she tells the spies that the land has practically fallen to the Israelites already, since the inhabitants are in such fear of them. According to Rahab, why are they in such fear of the Israelites?
5. Joshua 5.13 to 7.26: Let's plan on making this reading the subject of some extended discussion in seminar groups on Monday; so my questions on it are less detailed. (a) This assigned section is about the conquest of Jericho, with its famous walls that come a-tumbling down. The footnotes call this section "a paradigm for the entire enterprise of conquest" - that is, it establishes the typical pattern for everything else. The writers of Joshua are at pains to show that this conquest was not just a greedy land grab; they want to show that it was a holy war. What details in this section seem to support this idea? (b) What parts of this reading remind you of parts of the reading about Moses? (c) What details of this reading raise themes relevant to apocalyptic?

6. Joshua 10.1-43: (a) Pause over 10.8, where YHWH tells Joshua not to fear going up against the Amorite kings, "for I have handed them over to you." This line is common in these books of the Bible involving the Israelites' battles with enemies. Note how it suggests that YHWH, in his time frame, has already done something but it still needs to be carried out through the efforts of humans in their time frame. (b) As the battle against the Amorite kings continues, who kills the most Amorites? (c) The beautiful short poem at 10.12-13 is one of the oldest fragments in the Bible. (Maybe Lilla Kovacs will read it to us in Hebrew.) What echoes of apocalyptic do you find in it?

7. Joshua 23.1-24.21: Ring a bell? Point to some specific things that ring a bell.