Endings/Spring 06

Assignment for Wednesday, May 17

There are two separate assignments for today.

(1) Read the attached excerpt from Hesiod, *Works and Days*.

We have been finding apocalyptic elements in much of the Hebrew prophecy we’ve been reading. These are undoubtedly one source of apocalyptic as a literary genre, which we finally come to this week with the Book of Daniel. Other sources have been found in many other ancient literatures of the region, including “Ugaritic, Akkadian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Cannanite, Greek, Hellenistic, and Roman,” according to Paul Boyer in *When Time Shall Be No More* (Harvard, 1992, 21).

*In writing:* This brief excerpt from Hesiod is an example of ancient Greek poetry with apocalyptic elements. Please read it and say which of the elements of apocalyptic writing listed below you find in Hesiod, and where (the paragraphs have been numbered for your convenience; you need not write things out).

(a) the idea of truths being revealed – often by a special revealer (such as an angel) to a special recipient (such as a chosen prophet or saint)
(b) a division of history into stages
(c) the rise and fall of successive empires and prideful emperors and kings
(d) the use of symbols (often to describe the stages)
(e) disasters and upheavals
(f) punishment – the disasters and upheavals are brought on by human sin
(g) the idea that everything is unfolding according to a divine plan
(h) division and opposition between good and evil, good people and evil people, good divinities and bad divinities
(i) an ultimately happy ending for those on the good side

(2) In the Bible, read Daniel 1.1 to 6.28. *In the Apocrypha section* (middle of our Bible) “The Prayer of Azariah,” “Susanna,” and “Bel and the Dragon,” three more Daniel tales that did not make it into the Hebrew canon. *(Optional: Harris sixth edition pp. 305-310, 320-323, 325-326, is full of excellent material. Sorry: no seventh edition page numbers available. My copy seems to have been taken from my office!)*

Answer all questions below in writing, please:

1. According to the introduction in our Bible or to Harris, what years do the tales in the first six chapters seem to date from?

2. Most of you will agree, I believe, that the first six chapters of Daniel feel and sound different from the prophets that we have been reading. List at least two, and preferably more, ways in which these chapters sound different, especially from Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.
3. According to the introduction in our Bible, to Harris, and to most mainstream scholarship, Daniel seems to have been written between 167-164 B.C.E. for Jews facing persecution and martyrdom under a particularly cruel tyrant, Antiochus IV. You can read about him in Harris, *sixth edition*, 305-310. Antiochus was a member of the Seleucid dynasty of Syria that took over part of the Greek (Hellenistic) empire after the death of Alexander. Antiochus imposed the Hellenistic assimilation Harris discusses – forcing the ethnically diverse peoples under his dominion to adopt Hellenistic culture and religion. Antiochus identified his rule with that of Zeus, king of the Greek gods, and said to the Jews and others, “Worship me or die.” (a) What does the first half of the Book of Daniel say to people in such a situation? (b) What particular consolations and rewards does it promise? *Please point to specific examples in the Daniel reading.*

4. The Book of Daniel divides pretty clearly into two halves. The first half, which is your assignment for today, is not especially apocalyptic. As the introduction in our Bible says, it reads more like a collection of folk tales. But it has apocalyptic elements. Go back to the list of apocalyptic elements above, and say which ones you find in the first six chapters of Daniel. *For each one you list, give at least one biblical citation.*

5. In what ways do the non-canonical additions to Daniel (“The Prayer of Azariah,” etc.) fit perfectly well with the Book of Daniel? In what ways do they seem to be different. If you were on an ancient council of rabbis, would you have admitted these apocryphal books to the canon? (Don’t spend a lot of time on this question.)