For Friday, 5/19

Note: In the previous handout, I gave the page numbers (305-310) in the Harris *sixth* edition where you could read about the Macedonian-Syrian tyrant Antiochus IV, who tried to force Greek (Hellenistic) culture and religion down the throats of the Jews on pain of death. The relevant page numbers in the *seventh* edition are 285-288.

In Harris *sixth* 67-68, seventh 63, read his sweeping review Alexander the Great’s conquests and the Hellenistic Era. Note especially the information on the important Maccabean Revolt against the Greeks. This revolt started in 167 BCE; by 142 BCE the Jews had succeeded in kicking the Syrians out of their land, regaining their Temple and control of their own affairs. (That’s 25 years! Insurgencies against invading powers can go on for a long time!) This independence lasted almost 80 years until the Romans occupied Judea in 63 BCE. You can read a bit more about the revolt in Harris’s introduction to 1 Maccabees, the apocryphal/deuterocanonical work about the revolt. See Harris *sixth* 311-314, *seventh* 289-292.

Anyway, Daniel is thought to have been written just before the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt. One should not, however, get the impression that all Jews were in total opposition to Greek thought and culture. See the last paragraph of this section of Harris. The Jewish Diaspora had been going on for a long time, and Jews were living harmoniously within larger cultures, both Persian and then Greek.

Here is another observation on all this:

To a large extent, apocalyptic thought can be understood as a development of earlier Jewish interest in the course of history, prophetic predictions concerning the future, and the hopes or expectations of an ideal time to come. On the other hand, apocalyptic thought developed out of Judaism influenced both overtly and indirectly through the general assimilation of religious thought throughout the Persian era and during the early Hellenistic age. The Zoroastrian religion of the Persians was, like much of Israelite religion, a prophetic faith that possessed a body of sacred writings traced back to revelations made to Zoroaster. Zoroastrianism had its supreme god (Ahura-Mazda) who was the creator and who was worshipped in an imageless cult. The division of its calendar focused on the six great acts of creation. The religion affirmed a resurrection of the dead and a final judgment and it proclaimed the eventual triumph of good over evil and the victory of right over its dualistic counterpart evil. The Hellenistic age was a time of great religious assimilationism when deities and cults were identified and amalgamated and often influenced one another unconsciously. Many Hellenistic cults emphasized and were interested in divine mysteries, sharing in the life of the god, cosmology, astrology, and so on, and drew upon various fields of learning. It should be remembered that Judaism shared in the common Persian world for over two centuries and lived rather peacefully for over a century in the Hellenistic world before the eruption of the Hebraism-Hellenism conflict.

John Hayes, *Introduction to the Bible*
1. **In writing:** For Wednesday, you were asked to think of ways in which the first half of Daniel "feels and sounds" different from the Hebrew prophecy we have been reading. You will probably agree that the differences continue into the second half. What information above (on the previous page) might help to account for these differences from Hebrew prophecy? Two or three sentences is all you need to write.

2. **In writing:** read Daniel 7.1 to end, and answer these questions:

   a) Don’t try to pin down every “horn” in Daniel. But do give the answer to these two questions: (a) Who is the chief earthly villain of the second half of Daniel? (b) By what is he symbolized?

   b) Read Harris, sixth edition 316-320, seventh edition 271-274, with special attention to the section on “Characteristics of Apocalyptic Writing,” a better-explained list than I gave you for the Hesiod reading. Using Harris’s list, pick five characteristics that are especially prominent in Daniel 7 to 12. For each one, give a chapter-verse citation in Daniel, quoting the first five words of the citation.

   c) Chapters one through six of Daniel are stories about Daniel and some other Israelites in Nebuchadnezzar’s court; chapters seven through twelve are a series of visions. Conceptually, how do the stories relate to the visions? What reason (other than that Daniel is the hero of both sections) is there for considering them parts of the same unit? What themes or situations common to the visions and stories tie them together? I guess these are all versions of the same question. So just write three sentences about three connections you can see between the two halves of Daniel.

**For Monday, May 22**


I am assigning this excerpt for two main reasons: (1) It includes passages from the only non-biblical first century (CE) Jewish apocalyptic we’re going to have time to look at (I had hoped to look at rather more), and (2) This is a chance to read a small bit of real scholarship on our topic as opposed to the textbook distillations of Harris. Harris is a wonderfully clear textbook presenters of scholars’ ideas. N.T. Wright (like Batto) is the thing itself (though even here he is writing for a general audience). He is “Fellow, Chaplain, and Tutor in Theology” at Worcester College, Oxford University, in England. This brief excerpt is from a 500-page book which is one volume of a five-volume series on the “historical and theological questions surrounding the origins of Christianity”! It seems a brilliant work from what I have read of it and was recommended to me by Professor Eugene Webb (just retired from UW), who considers it the best available work on the historical Jesus, for those of you who might be interested.

*Please answer all these questions in writing. I have numbered the ten paragraphs of Wright for ease of reference.*

1. The title of this section, “No King But God,” recalls us to a point many weeks back in our study of Israelite history. What point is that?
2. Wright tells us that there were first-century Jews talking about military-political revolution against Rome. Were their motives in all cases religious?

3. Re-visit Daniel 2.31-45. This is Daniel interpreting Nebuchadnezzar’s dream about the statue made of many metals. (a) Again, when was Daniel written? (b) Which was the last of the four empires Daniel would have been referring to in this passage (this would be the one in his own time)?

4. A continuation of the previous question. Wright mentions “Josephus.” This would be Flavius Josephus (37-100 CE), an important Jewish historian who got along with the Roman authorities and was allowed to do his work. It is reasonable to suppose that getting along with the Roman authorities involved practicing certain restraints in his writing. Wright tells us in par. 4 that Josephus, though he doesn’t say it himself, clearly knew of interpretations of Daniel in Josephus’s own time that re-interpreted Daniel 2.31-45 as foretelling the destruction, not of Hellenistic Syria in about 160 BCE, but of ______ in ________?

5. Back to Daniel for a moment. In Daniel 2.44, after “foretelling” the destruction of those four kingdoms, what does Daniel say will happen when the kings of those empires are destroyed?

6. In Wright’s par. 5, there is an important passage from “The Testament of Moses,” one of the only passages of non-biblical first century (CE) Jewish apocalyptic we’ll get to read. What specific lines echo passages of biblical apocalyptic we have read?

7. Wright’s par. 6 includes another passage of non-biblical apocalyptic. Note the fascinatingly detailed military plans. What point does Wright make about all this?

8. In par. 8, Wright makes a very important point, I think. Why, according to him, did those writers use cosmic imagery to write about the coming earthly victory of Israel over its earthly enemies?

9. So according to Wright (par. 9), in these apocalyptic writings, when the kingdom of God comes and God is king, how will he rule the world? Through ___________ (one word).

10. According to Wright (par. 10), is the expectation in these apocalyptic writings really that, after the apocalypse, Israel will have no earthly rulers, no king but God?