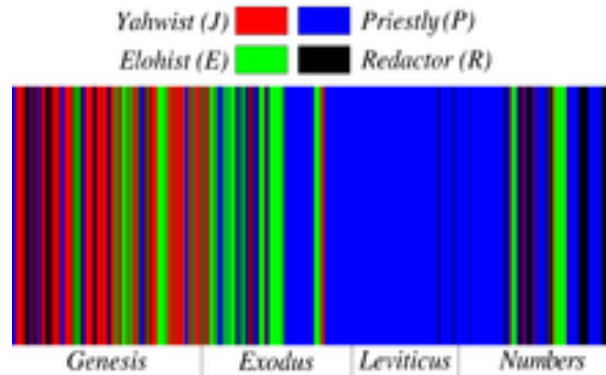


Session 8 – Study Notes

Exodus 12:1-31

Rev. Jan Cook



Redaction is a form of editing in which multiple source texts are combined (*redacted*) and altered slightly to make a single document. Often this is a method of collecting a series of writings on a similar theme and creating a definitive and coherent work.

On occasion, the persons performing the redaction (the redactors) add brief elements of their own. The reasons for doing so are varied and can include the addition of elements to adjust the underlying conclusions of the text to suit the redactor's opinion, adding bridging elements to integrate disparate stories, or the redactor may add a frame story, such as the tale of Scheherazade which frames the collection of folk tales in *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*.

Sometimes the source texts are interlaced, particularly when discussing closely related details, things, or people. This is common when source texts contain alternative versions of the same story, and slight alterations are often made in this circumstance, simply to make the texts appear to agree, and thus the resulting redacted text appears to be coherent. Such a situation is proposed by the documentary hypothesis, which proposes that multiple redactions occurred during the creation of the Torah, often combining texts, which have rival political attitudes and aims, together; another example is the Talmud.

Redactional processes are documented in numerous disciplines, including ancient literary works and biblical studies. Much has been written on the role of redaction in creating meaning for texts in various formats.^[3]

- **Look over handout on the history of the Passover**

12:1-28

1. This section consists of a word of God to Moses regarding the ritual – Passover and unleavened bread combined. To be followed for the deathly event to come (vv. 1-20) and a speech of Moses to the elders regarding Passover only (vv.21-27)
2. While these accounts probably have their roots in separate sources (P and J respectively), verses 21-27 are now presented as an abbreviated report of verses 1-20.
3. A well accepted understanding of Passover is that it is rooted in an existing nomadic rite of passage. A yearly celebration of the abundance of spring and a ritual to ward off evil spirits. Unlike its function in a nomadic rite, the blood of the Passover has no apotropaic property.

(a-pe-tropay) magic or protective magic is a type of magic intended to turn away harm or evil influences, as in deflecting misfortune or averting the evil eye.

4. Whatever the roots of Passover may have been, it has now been drawn into the heart of the liberating event itself and represented as a God-given ritual for a coming event and its subsequent actualization.
5. What is important in this account is the promise that is associated with the sign, not the sign in and of itself.
6. The blood was the life of creation given for the people who lived in the marked houses. It is the life given that provides the life for Israel, not simply the blood as a marker of protection. But it has this power because of the word of God that so proclaims its significance. *God uses creation to achieve redemption.*
7. The Passover is the Lord's Passover, which means it is a sacramental vehicle for making the exodus redemption real and effective for both present and subsequent generations. The reenactment is as much salvific event as the original enactment. The "memory" language (12:14), 13:3,9; Deut. 16:3) is not a "soft" matter, recalling to mind some story from the past.

Exodus 12:29-36

8. As noted, the placement of this plague in the midst of ritual considerations takes it out of the normal flow of the story, out of ordinary time and space. This gives it an impressionistic character in relation to actual events. Its somewhat episodic flow may be due to the composite nature of the text, but it also enables the narrator quickly to view death and new life from different angles of vision.

One of the most dramatic moments of the Passover Seder comes with the recitation of the 10 plagues that, the Bible says, God brought on the Egyptians to persuade Pharaoh to free the Israelites from slavery

"As we recite each plague, we spill a drop of wine in recognition, according to many interpretations, that the process of our liberation caused suffering to the Egyptian people."

9. The killing of firstborn, ought not to be interpreted literally (its possible historical basis is that no household remained untouched.) As with the other plagues, the emphasis on "all" is intended to portray an aspect of creation gone berserk. The moral order has "boomeranged" in such a way that the order of nature (which includes epidemics) has become something it ought not to be.
10. The narrator formulates Pharaoh's last words to Moses in the language of a benediction: *Bless me*. Its tone and intent are uncertain; the narrator leaves the reader with the ambiguity. What will happen to Pharaoh?

Exodus 12:37-51

11. Verses 12:37-51 are a composite from various sources and probe a variety of concerns. As a result, the final redaction is highly episodic. It is as if every storyteller through whose hands this material passed had to enter some notes on the import of this central event.
12. They were a "mixed crowd," consisting of more than the descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob. Many non-Israelites had been integrated into the community of faith, and other communities took advantage of the opportunity to choose freedom.

REFLECTIONS

What strikes you most about this final accounting of the final plague?

What questions about God's dealings with humanity does this account raise?

What impact do you think having so many sources feeding one story has on the story itself?

In what ways does learning about the nature of the Passover inform you about our ritual of the Lord's Supper?

The History of the Passover Seder

- 1, The Passover Seder is one of the most recognized and widely practiced of Jewish rituals, *yet had our ancestors visited one of these modern-day celebrations, they would be baffled.*
2. **Not only does our modern Seder wildly diverge from the Passover of old: during antiquity itself the holiday underwent radical changes.** Below we chart as best we can - considering the shortage of historical documentation - the origins of Passover, from the dawn of Israelite people to the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, and the consequent establishment of the embryonic Passover Seder, which modern Jews would recognize.
3. **As the centralized Israelite state took shape about 3,000 years ago, , the religion of the people varied from place to place and took variegated forms,** hints of which we can see in the Bible, *virtually the only historical narrative we have of this period.* Among the different folk beliefs and frankly polytheistic practices these proto-Israelites practiced, **the springtime rites seem to have had special status.** Two of these rituals would later become subsumed by Passover: ***Pesach* and *Hag Hamatzot*.**
4. **Pesach was a pastoral apotropaic ritual,** that is: ***its purpose is to ward off evil.*** It was carried out by the *semi-nomadic segment of Israelite society that subsisted on livestock.* Spring was a critical time of the year for them, a time of lambing and a sign that soon they would have to migrate to find a summer pasture for their flock.
5. In order to protect their flocks, and families, from the dangers ahead, they would **slaughter their flock's newest addition as an offering, either a lamb or a kid, in a bloody ritual followed by a family feast.**

The Origin of Matza

6. **Hag Hamatzot,** on the other hand, was **celebrated by the settled segment of Israelite society,** who lived in villages and who *drew their subsistence from farming.* For them too ***spring was crucial, meaning the start of the harvest, of the cereals on which they depended.***
7. Of the cereals grown by the ancient Israelites in this period, **the first grain to be ready for harvest was barley.** Although this made *for inferior bread,* it was highly prized: not rarely, by the spring harvest, the last year's stores had been already depleted and hunger took grip of the land.
8. **This new bread would have been unleavened,** as the leavening used at the time was a portion of dough set aside from the last batch of bread. But this would have been unavailable due to the gap created by the empty stores. **Add to this the fact that barley flour hardly rises anyway, and that the baking techniques of the time would have made even the superior bread made of wheat flour flat and hard, and you've got matza.**
9. Still, when hungry even matza is a cause for celebration, and one could imagine that the communal threshing grounds were filled with joy, cheer, and jubilation.

The Holidays Are Merged

10. As the monarchy was established and a centralized religion took form, **the two holidays began merging into one.** The process was a gradual one, which culminated in both converging to the full moon in the middle of the spring month of Nisan.
11. The location of the celebrations was ***moved from the home and the community to the Temple in Jerusalem.***
12. No doubt, an important milestone in this process took place in the reforms of the 16-year-old King Josiah in 622 BCE, as described in chapter 22 of the Second Book of Kings.
13. We are told that **Josiah ordered the temple be renovated.** and that During this process, as Hilkiyah the high priest was clearing the Temple's treasure room, **"The Book of the Law," - believed to be an early version of the Book of Deuteronomy - was found.** *This led to a series of reforms* carried out by Josiah to bring the land into accord with the newly discovered divine ordinances.

14. **A major part of these reforms was the reform of Passover:** “And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the Passover unto the Lord your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant.” (23:21)
15. It was **no longer supposed to be a family affair but a centralized national observance: the Book of Deuteronomy** clearly stipulates that the Pesach sacrifice may not be made “within any of thy gates” but rather at the Temple. (16:5-6)
16. **Pilgrimage to Jerusalem**
17. Following Josiah’s reforms, **the holiday took the form of a mass pilgrimage to Jerusalem.** The people would bring their paschal lamb (or kid) to be sacrificed at the Temple.
18. **The feast of unleavened bread began the day after.** All were commanded to avoid eating leavened bread for a week, though it seems that this wasn’t accompanied by any special practices in the Temple; the Israelites would probably have followed this precept on their way home and at their homes themselves.
19. *Not much more is known about the celebration at this time. This was apparently the time in which the story of the exodus from Egypt was introduced.* But this form of practice didn’t last long. In 586, BCE the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem, the Temple was destroyed and the period in Jewish history called the Babylonian Captivity began.

The Hasmonean Reform

20. Under the new **Hasmonean regime**, the **sacrifice of the Pesach offering was done by the head of the household himself, not by the priests.** On the other hand, during the week following Pesach, special sacrifices were given, and these were sacrificed by the temple staff - the priests and the Levites.
21. **Another innovation** that seems to have arisen under the Hasmonean Dynasty was **the singing of songs praising God and the drinking of wine during the family meals**, as well as some kind of public celebration at the end of the week of Hag Hamatzot.
22. The civil war that resulted from the murder of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE led to the demise of the Hasmonean Dynasty and the ascent of Herod the Great to the Judean crown in 37 BCE, as a puppet ruler of Rome. This had little effect on Passover, which continued pretty much as it was under Hasmonean rule. **However, the vast numbers of Jews coming from throughout the Roman Empire forced change, as there was no longer room for everyone to have their paschal meal within the confines of the Temple.** *The rules were relaxed to the extent that the meal could be eaten anywhere within Jerusalem.*
23. But this **massive influx of Jews to Jerusalem made the Roman authorities uneasy.** Several sources from this period report that the Jerusalem garrison was fortified during Passover to prepare for any unruliness.
24. *The Passover meal in this form was the meal described in the New Testament as Jesus’ last supper.*
25. **In 66 CE, religious tensions between Greek and Jewish citizens, and protests over the heavy tax burden, boiled over into the Jewish rebellion against Rome.** This rebellion was put down in 70 CE. Roman legions under Titus retook Jerusalem, destroying the Temple and much of the rest of the city. *Passover was never to be celebrated as it had been again.*
26. **In Yavne, a rabbinical school** led by Rabbi Johanan ben Zakai and Rabban Gamaliel II, set out to **forge a new Judaism** adapted to a post-Temple world. **Among their innovations**, which were **later redacted into the Mishnah**, was the **embryonic form of the Passover Seder** we know and celebrate today.

Sources

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