Historical Survey:
Alexander to Antiochus
Epiphanes (334- ca 170 BCE)

From last time
- "Religion of the Bible" and mythology of the Ancient Near East

For today
- Alexander’s conquests
- Ptolemies and Seleucids
- Hellenism, Hellenization
- Judaea in the Hellenistic Period

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"Religion of the Bible" and mythology of the Ancient Near East

- Flood narratives: Genesis 6-8 and the Gilgamesh epic
- Genesis 1 and a de-mythologized creation (cf. Enuma Elish)
- Biblical myths of cosmic battle at creation, and their near-eastern context

Flood narratives: Genesis 6-8 and the Gilgamesh epic

- Further discussion in section
- Common features:
  - Dove, Raven to test the receding waters
  - Sacrifice
  - Odor of the sacrifice appeasing
- But also differences
  - Moral tenor of the genesis account
  - Conflict of the Gods vs. disobedience toward the one creator God.
Genesis 1 and a de-mythologized creation

- Genesis 1: orderly, logical creation, progressing from darkness and watery deep (tehom)
- But Enuma Elish:
  
  "[Having defeated Tiamat ("Tehom"), Marduk] gazed at the huge body, pondering how to use it, what to create from the dead carcass. He split it apart like a cockle-shell, with the upper half he constructed the arc of sky, he pulled down the bar and set a watch on the waters, so they should never escape." (Cf. Day 2 of creation)
  
  In what follows, Marduk creates the rest of the world from Tiamat’s carcass.
- Genesis 1 possibly an active rejection of a mythology it knows and understands

Biblical myths of cosmic battle at creation

- Enuma Elish
- Ugarit (Ras Shamra), examples of 13th C-12th C canaanite versions of a cosmic battle over chaos, with Ba’al the great champion
- Assigned for class: Is 51, Ps 74, Ps 89 include examples of this motif
- Significance: Genesis 1 ("P") suppresses not only "gentile" mythology, but also Israelite mythology

YHWH as conqueror

Ps. 85 (RSV):

5 Let the heavens praise thy wonders, O LORD, thy faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! 6 For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD, 7 a God feared in the council of the holy ones, great and terrible above all that are round about him? 8 O LORD God of hosts, who is mighty as thou art, O LORD, with thy faithfulness round about thee? 9 Thou dost rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, thou stillest them. 10 Thou didst crush Rahab like a carcass, thou didst scatter thy enemies with thy mighty arm. 11 The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine; the world and all that is in it, thou hast founded them. 12 The north and the south, thou hast created them; Tabor and Hermon joyously praise thy name.
Alexander’s conquests

- Asia Minor (Issus, 333)
- Syria, Phoenicia (Lebanon), Palestine 333-332
- Invasion of Egypt in 332
- Invasion of Mesopotamia and Persia (Gaugamela 331)
- 327 invasion of India
- 325 returns to Mesopotamia; dies in Babylon 323

Ptolemies and Seleucid

- Ptolemies: Centered in Egypt
  - From ca 300, control southern Syria, including Palestine
  - Character: fairly developed governmental ("bureaucratic") structures in Egypt
  - Limited documents suggest attempts to establish similar pattern in other areas
- Seleucids:
  - Initially centered in Mesopotamia and East. Later center moves west to Syria
  - 202-195, establish control over southern Syria (Antiochus III)
  - Possibly a policy of encouraging refoundations of cities as poleis (sing. polis, Greek city state)

Hellenism, Hellenization

- From the Greek word for Greece (Hellas), broadly the spread of "Greek" culture
- Culture of the conquerors
- NB: the culture of Macedonian officers and soldiers, and Greek scribes and agents, looking back at "democratic" Athens as a model
  - Influence on conquered population
    - Sometimes directly the result of conquest: new bureaucratic needs; "Greek" cities founded by outright settlement (e.g., Samaria, late 4th C)
    - But also indirect: adaptation and appropriation of new ideas, practices, language, trade goods, tastes, etc.
    - E.g., under leaderships with established connections to rulers, some ancient city-states (e.g., Gaza, Tyre) "became" Greek cities
Judaea in the Early Hellenistic Period

- A small “Temple state”—a territory governed by a temple and its priesthood (product of late Persian, Hellenistic)
- Political (and economic) reorientation to Mediterranean rather than to Mesopotamia
- Particularly under Seleucids: Opportunities for local elites to advance through adopting Greek language, culture; through political reform (foundation of poleis)