

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

September 27, 2006

From last time

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

For today

- Alexander's conquests
- Ptolemies and Seleucid
- Hellenism, Hellenization
- Judaea in the Hellenistic Period

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

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

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Empire of Alexander (334-323)



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Seleucids and Ptolemies, ca 240



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Hellenistic Era Palestine



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## 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*)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---