

Principal Texts of Rabbinic Literature

November 6, 2006

From last time: Rabbinic Literature

- Texts organized around Mishnah
- Texts organized around Scripture (Midrash)

For today: Jewish Religion in Late Antiquity

- Arguing from worldview (Jaffee)
- Arguing from practice (and gender) (Kramer)

Texts organized around Mishnah

- Tannaitic
 1. Tosefta (“the supplement”)
- Amoraic
 2. Palestinian Talmud
 3. Babylonian Talmud

Texts organized around Scripture (Midrash)

- Tannaitic
 1. “Halachic”: includes concern with legal issues.
*** Pentateuch (Exodus-Deuteronomy) only
- Amoraic (overwhelmingly “aggadic”)
 2. “Exegetical” (verse-by-verse progression)
 3. “Homiletical” (clustering of interpretations around select verses, probably beginning of a reading section)
*** Pentateuch and others.

Religion: Arguing from worldview (Jaffee)

Jaffee focuses on **worldview** (ideology, what people think and know about the world), analyzed along two axes:

- Vertical: God, Torah, Israel
Focus: Rightness with God, maintained through faithful practice.
 - Wisdom traditions (e.g. Joshua (Jesus) b. Sira)
 - Philo: experience of the divine through contemplation
- Horizontal: Exile, Messiah
Focus: Historical experience (exile) to be repaired in time (expectation of a savior)
 - Apocalyptic texts (end-time recapitulates beginnings; texts reveal previously secret knowledge)
 - Attested messianic movements

Religion: Arguing from worldview: Rabbis

- Mishnah: emphasizes vertical, de-emphasizes horizontal ("as if" Temple still stands, there is still a king, etc.)
- In later texts: greater emphasis on messianic expectation (Midrash, Talmud)
- In addition: also cosmological aspects of vertical axis (structure of the heavens e.g.), especially in developing mystical tradition.

Religion: Arguing from practice (and gender) (Kraemer)

Kraemer, writing on women, focuses on **practices** rather than ideology

- Data: inscriptions (product of day-to-day relations) rather than (or in conjunction with) literary texts
- Synagogues: prayer and study, but also endowments and leadership
- Aspects of women's piety (again as practice): certain festivals, "magic"
- For a few elite women, possibility of leading contemplative life (e.g. Therapeutae (Philo))
