



Religion of Israel Religion of the Bible

September 20, 2006

- Electronic Reserves, one last time
- Definitions: Religion of the Bible vs. Religion of Israel
- Multiplicity of voices in biblical texts: textual sources in the Bible
- Religion of Israel: Women as a point of departure



One Last Time: Electronic Reserves

Let's go to the web and try it again.



Definitions: Religion of the Bible vs. Religion of Israel

- Religion: the practices, beliefs, and stories that underlie a community's understanding of the world and give it coherence

For present purposes

- Religion of the Bible: The set of **proper** acts, rituals, and dispositions (e.g., "Loving" God) demanded by the authors and editors of the Bible
- Religion of the Israelites: The variety of acts, experiences, beliefs, etc., **practiced by** Israelites. May include (**e.g.**)
 - "Improper" acts, etc. (from perspective of Bible)
 - Other **ranges** of acts (e.g., the religious lives of women)



Multiplicity of Voices in Biblical Texts: Textual sources in the Bible

- Judges 1 and Joshua (acc. to Callaway): Biblical authors may differ on perspective toward major events
- Authorship of Torah/Pentateuch: Documentary Hypothesis (theory of **multiple, differing** authors within a book)
 - See handout (p. 1)
 - Will apply this idea later in Semester
- Method/perspective applies to other books as well
- Also applies to Biblical law.
 - Handout p. 1 gives example Passover sacrifice.
 - P. 2 summarizes calendars. Note e.g., Leviticus includes more festivals; more concerned with precise dates



Documentary Hypothesis

- Four sources: J, E, P, and D
- Two sources identified by names for God in Genesis
 - J for Jehovah (Yahweh) (usually trans. "LORD")
 - E for Elohim (usually trans. "God")
- D identified by language, themes; also generally corresponds with Deuteronomy
- P (for "Priest"), is the framework into which J, E embedded in making up Genesis-Numbers

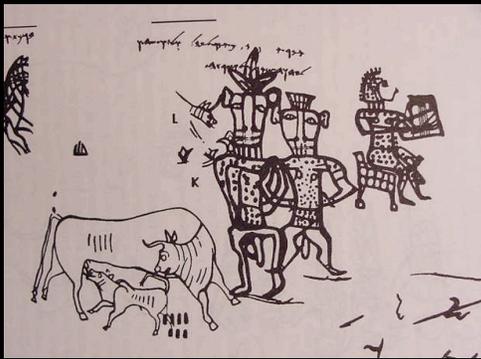


Religion of the Bible: Some Major Themes

- **Acts:** Sacrifice or other dedication, donation of property. Donors may be pilgrims (Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits/Weeks (Shavuot), Sukkot/Tabernacles)
- **Persons:** Priests assigned the role of performing, mediating sacrifices; divination
- **Locations:** Sacred locations; may involve pilgrimage. For much of the Bible, only one sacrificial place, Jerusalem Temple (e.g., Deut 16 in handout)
- **Stories:** In particular the Exodus is **the** central story, especially in Torah. (**Note:** agricultural festivals—become commemorations of the Exodus)
- **Time:** Performance of acts **in their appointed times**. But time can be relative (e.g., at/after harvest) or fixed (15th day of 7th month)

Religion of Ancient Israel: Women as a Point of Departure

- Religion of the Bible is exclusive—male priests preside—and focuses on male heads of household
- Women are markers of “improper” (offering cakes to the Queen of Heaven) or “unofficial” (e.g., virgins bewailing the fate of Jephthah’s daughters) religion
- Interact with sacred places, personalities in cases generally relating to (in)fertility
- Suggests: a range of practices, concerns, outside the specific interest of Biblical law or narrative.
(E.g., We know **that** people married, and how it was conceived as a matter of households and property, but not how/whether it was **celebrated**)



Drawings, inscriptions from Kuntillet Ajrud, 8th C. BCE