

The Fruits of Monotheism

Week 4; November 26, 2018

Divine Justice; Jewish Apocalypticism

The biblical pronouncements about how and when divine justice is delivered show a distinct progression.

Reading:

Genesis chapter 18:16-33 [[pdf](#)]

In the beginning, God would spare Sodom if there could be found within it ten righteous persons. It would be hard to imagine a clearer example of divine justice being delivered to the community as a unit even though it is individuals who are themselves righteous or not. This text established the notion that righteous members of the community could overcome the deleterious effects of the wicked.

Exodus 34:6-7. “⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed: “The LORD! the LORD! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness and faithfulness, ⁷extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment, but visits the iniquity of parents upon children and children's children, upon the third and fourth generations.”

Exodus 20:5-6. “You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I the LORD your God am an impassioned God, visiting the guilt of the parents upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, ⁶but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

Here, the family is taken as the unit but, instead of the righteous family members providing protection for the unrighteous, the wicked generate punishment for others. Note the very subtle difference: in ch 34, the punishment may be visited on the later generations without qualification; in ch 20, the punishment is limited to only those descendants who continue to be unrighteous.

Deuteronomy chapter 28 [[pdf](#)]

A very thorough enumeration of the benefits of following the commandments and of the unhappy consequences of failing to follow them. Note that the community is to be judged as a whole. No need to read the whole chapter once you have the idea!

Ezekiel chapter 18:20-24, 30. “²⁰The person who sins, he alone shall die. A child shall not share the burden of a parent's guilt, nor shall a parent share the burden of a child's guilt; the righteousness of the righteous shall be accounted to him alone, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be accounted to him alone.

²¹Moreover, if the wicked one repents of all the sins that he committed and keeps all My laws and does what is just and right, he shall live; he shall not die. ²²None of the transgressions he committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness he has practiced, he shall live. ²³Is it my desire that a wicked person shall die?—says the Lord GOD. It is rather that he shall turn back from his ways and live.

²⁴So, too, if a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does wrong, practicing the very abominations that the wicked person practiced, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds that he did shall be remembered; because of the treachery he has practiced and the sins he has committed—because of these, he shall die. . . .

³⁰Be assured, O House of Israel, I will judge each one of you according to his ways—declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn back from your transgressions; let them not be a stumbling block of guilt for you.”

Not only do we have, by the time of the exile, a major adjustment in the delivery of divine justice, we have a firm announcement that repentance can eliminate punishment. (Can you hear John the Baptist?) Note too that this new understanding of divine justice as an individual matter is taken for granted in Job: the possibility that Job is being punished for the sins of his ancestors is never suggested.

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John J. Collins, “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End”, in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, volume 1, p. 129-145 [[pdf](#)]

A somewhat dry (sorry!) but very useful survey of the move towards apocalypticism. Skip over the occasional deep dive into some text but be on the lookout for the sentences which give a solid summary.

Biblical texts on the renewal of Israel:

Ezekiel 37 (the dry bones) [[pdf](#)]

Isaiah 24-27 (the [proto-] “apocalypse of Isaiah”) [[pdf](#)]

Ezekiel 38-39 [[pdf](#)]

Jewish texts on the origins of evil:

Genesis 6:1-6: “¹When men began to increase on earth and daughters were born to them, ²the divine beings ^bsaw how beautiful the daughters of men were and took wives from among those that pleased them.—³The LORD said, “My breath shall not abide ^cin man forever, since he too is flesh; let the days allowed him be one hundred and twenty years.”—⁴It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth—when the divine beings cohabited with the daughters of men, who bore them offspring. They were the heroes of old, the men of renown. ⁵The LORD saw how great was man's wickedness on earth, and how every plan devised by his mind was nothing but evil all the time. ⁶And the LORD regretted that He had made man on earth, and His heart was saddened.”

1 Enoch 6-11 (great judgment day), *22* (judgment of the dead) [[pdf](#)]

Jewish texts on the end times:

Daniel chapter 7 [[pdf](#)]

Daniel chapter 11:40-12:3. “⁴⁰At the time of the end, the king of the south will lock horns with him, but the king of the north will attack him with chariots and riders and many ships. He will invade lands, sweeping through them like a flood; ⁴¹he will invade the beautiful land, too, and many will fall, but these will escape his clutches: Edom, Moab, and the chief part of the Ammonites. ⁴²He will lay his hands on lands; not even the land of Egypt will escape. ⁴³He will gain control over treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and Cushites will follow at his heel. ⁴⁴But reports from east and north will alarm him, and he will march forth in a great fury to destroy and annihilate many. ⁴⁵He will pitch his royal pavilion between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain, and he will meet his doom with no one to help him.

¹“At that time, the great prince, Michael, who stands beside the sons of your people, will appear. It will be a time of trouble, the like of which has never been since the nation came into being. At that time, your people will be rescued, all who are found inscribed in the book. ²Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence. ³And the knowledgeable will be radiant like the bright expanse of sky, and those who lead the many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever.””

War Scroll (Dead Sea Scrolls) (final battle) [[link](#)]

Manual of Discipline (Dead Sea Scrolls) p. 120-122 (two spirits) [[pdf](#)]

Jewish text on martyrdom:

2 Maccabees 6-7 [[pdf](#)]

James Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 260-265 [[pdf](#)]

Shaye J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, p. 138-143 [[pdf](#)]