

The Intertestamental Period



An Open Seminar
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The Wisdom of Solomon



A Look at the Afterlife

- Early views fairly uniform
- Hebrew “Sheol”
- All are destined to go there
- The soul persists but doesn’t like to be disturbed
- Necromancy a major sin



A Look at the Afterlife, Continued

- Mesopotamia, “Mat la tari” or “Kurnugia”
- The fate of all people; there is no way to avoid it
- Major theme in Epic of Gilgamesh
- No early models of afterlife carry implications of judgement after death.



Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld

"You should not put on your clean garments: they would recognise immediately that you are alien. You should not anoint yourself with fine oil from a bowl: they would surround you at its your scent. You should not hurl throw-sticks in the nether world: those struck down by the throw-sticks would surround you. You should not hold a cornel-wood stick in your hand: the spirits would feel insulted by you."

Gilgamesh, Enkidu, and the Netherworld

You should not put sandals on your feet. You should not shout in the nether world. You should not kiss your beloved wife. You should not hit your wife even if you are annoyed with her. You should not kiss your beloved child. You should not hit your son even if you are annoyed with him. The outcry aroused would detain you in the nether world."

Jacob Mourns for Joseph

34 So Jacob tore his clothes, and put sackcloth on his loins and mourned for his son many days.
35 Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, "Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son." So his father wept for him.

Genesis 37



Wisdom 3: Rewards and Punishments

- Life belongs to the righteous, death is the fate of the wicked
- God's blessing for righteousness is demonstrated by
 - Lack of suffering
 - Many children
 - Long life
- This chapter posits that in some cases, the opposite is likewise a sign of divine favor, or wrath.



Suffering: Punitive or Cathartic?

- Suffering is the result of judgement
- “Judgement” in ancient Hebrew can have two meanings: to examine and to protect
- “Judgement” (*mishpat*) in Hebrew legislation usually refers to “case law.”
- When the righteous suffer, it cleanses them.



The Problem of Death

- Confers three main benefits
- Peace, rest, repose
- Hope of immortality
- “Great blessings”
 - Associated with the cathartic nature of suffering for the righteous
 - “Chastisement” which equates to “instruction”



What is “Immortality”?

- Not quite to the idea of resurrection of the individual
- Virtue held in remembrance is a kind of immortality
- Progeny of the wicked can be a continual blight on their reputation; a kind of negative immortality
- Sometimes, the good die young; Enoch as an unnamed example.

