

The Intertestamental Period



An Open Seminar
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The Wisdom of Solomon



Chapters 11-19: The Nature of God's Punishment and Mercy

- What is an instrument of punishment for the wicked becomes a means of blessing the righteous
- Punishment of the righteous is “correction”
- Punishment of the wicked (Egyptians, Canaanites) is harsh and severe.



Punishment, Mercy, the Persistence of Evil

- Evil continues in order to allow the opportunity for repentance
- Evil persists because every creature incorporates elements of the divine
- God much prefers to receive repentance than to deal out judgement.



Elements of Contrasting Punishments

Chapters 11-19 of Wisdom couch the contrasting punishments and blessings in six different topics:

- Water
- Animals
- Elements
- Light and Darkness
- Death
- The Red Sea

Rabbinic Literary Devices

- More material of midrashic origins
- Implicit comparison:

“If this, how much more that!”

(Compare Leviticus 18)



Go to the text...

Come back for chapter 13

Critiques of Idolatry

- Traditional Israelite objections of idolatry was that it was a betrayal and abandonment of God
- Hosea is perhaps the most articulate example of this position
- Later view, found in 2nd Isaiah, is that idolatry was an example of rank stupidity



Wooden Idols or Straw Men?

- Babylonians recognized the “artifact problem”
- Ceremony denied the human manufacture of idols
- Ritual of “opening the mouth” made the statue capable of housing divine presence
- “This statue cannot smell incense, drink water, or eat food without the Opening of the Mouth!”



Is Wood Only Wood?

- Israelite polemic claimed that the wood of an idol was only that and nothing more
- Opening of the mouth ritual claimed that the wood of a statue was
...bright wood, (like the spring of a stream, which is born in the pure Heavens, [it] spreads out on the clean earth. [Its] branches grow up to Heaven. Enki makes [its] root drink up pure water from the Underworld.

Is Wood Only Wood? (Continued)

Erra, the plague god, taunts Marduk:

“Where is the wood, flesh of gods,
suitable for the lord of the universe,
The sacred tree, splendid stripling, perfect for
lordship,
Whose roots thrust down a hundred leagues
through the waters of the vast ocean to the
depths of hell,

Is Wood Only Wood? (Continued)

“Whose crown brushed Anu’s heaven on high?
Where is Ninildum, great carpenter of my
supreme deity,
Wielder of the blinding hatchet, who knows
that tool,
Who makes it shine like the day
and puts its subjection at my feet?
Where is Kusig-banda, fashioner of god
and man,
Whose hands are sacred?”

The Erra Epic: the Fate of a Neglected God

What happened to your attire, to the insignia of your lordship,
magnificent as the stars of the sky?

It has been dirtied!

What happened to the crown of your lordship,
which made Ehalanki as bright as Etemenanki?

Its surface is shrouded over?