

Ethnicity, Race, and the Bible

Part VI

Review...

- Tracing the development of Israel's identity in the Bible
- Genesis 1-11 Primordial History
 - Creation, expulsion from the garden, Cain and Abel, Flood, Tower of Babel
 - Purpose of these stories is to explain how things came to be and how things are
 - They are not strictly historical / serve more than one purpose

Primeval History

- Universal in scope
- The origins of all of humanity
- Common ancestry
- All of one blood
- Cain and Abel – first murder is fratricide

Genealogies/ *toledot*

- Units in the Primeval History are tied together by genealogies / *toledot* formulas
- Role/purpose of genealogies
 - Historical
 - Political
 - Social
 - Theological

- Genealogy informs identity
- How are the genealogies in the Primeval history informing Israel's identity?
- To what extent are the genealogies in chapters 1-11 providing the background for what comes later?

Abraham and the Ancestral Narratives

- Abraham's call
- Genesis 12:1 ff
- Predicated upon the table of nations in Genesis 10:1-32
- The stories about Noah's sons are instructive
- They are telling us about the “nations,” or “the others”

Layers in the Genesis Material

- Narrative units and traditions
- Creation
- Eve, Adam and their descendents
- Flood
- Babel
- Genealogies

Layers in the Genesis Material

- Experiences of Israel as a nation up until the time the materials were compiled and recorded
- How does what you know today influence how you tell a story of a past event?

Layers in the Genesis Material

- Theological intent
- This is always a story about how God works and interacts with God's people
- It's never, "just the facts," but always events and experiences in service to "the story of us."

Threat of the Exile

- 587/6 BCE
- Babylonian Exile was the motivating force behind the recording of biblical material
- So that current and subsequent generations don't forget
- So that Jews in exile preserve an identity

Loss of Identity...

- Equivalent to death
- Assimilation = Annihilation
- Identity is over and against the dominant culture

Identity as Construct

- The markers of our identity are external and reflect the values of our culture and context
- Class
- Professions
- Characteristics
- Family



The **SNEETCHES**

By
Dr. Seuss

If Identity is a construct...

- What elements would matter most to the Israelite community in exile that told its story?
- Resisting assimilation demand lines of demarcation between us and them
- The exiles had been subject to being “othered” by Babylon

“Other” and “Othering”

“Violence is not only what we do to the other. It is prior to that. Violence is the very construction of other”

- Regina Schwartz in *The Curse of Cain*, 5.

Identity as children of Abraham

- Genesis 12:1 ff
- Called out of...
- Called to...

What informs Israel's core identity?

Theology of grace or scarcity?

How does Israel live into her identity?

- Holiness as separateness
- Other races as contamination re: worship
- What is the critical factor in determining one's identity?
- This is the question that Israel wrestles with...

How do we “construct” family

- Birth – *toledot* formulas
- Marriage – foundational to establishment of family, but open to “new blood”
- Adoption – bringing outsiders in...

Theological implications...

- Covenant...marriage
- Prophetic texts use metaphor of marriage, Jeremiah 2:1 ff
- Adoption...
- Matthew 12:48-50, Ephesians 2:19

