Exploring Biblical Backgrounds
A Reader in Historical and Literary Contexts

Derek S. Dodson
Katherine E. Smith
Editors

BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS
CONTENTS

Preface xi

PART I
The Old Testament Background

A. Creation and Deluge 3
§1 Enuma Elish 3
§2 The History of Creation 9
  The Book of Knowing the Evolutions of Ra, and
  of Overthrowing Apep
§3 The Creation Legend of Ra Worshipers 11
§4 The History of Creation 12
  The Egyptian Book of the Dead
§5 Hesiod and Creation 14
  Hesiod, Theogony
  Hesiod, Works and Days
§6 The Flood 18
  The Epic of Gilgamesh

B. Law and Ritual 23
§7 Code of Hammurabi 23
§8 Code of Lipit-Ishtar 35
§9 Treaty between Mursili II of Hatti and
  Tuppi-Teshshup of Amurru 38
§10 Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon 41
§11 Unclean Animals 46
  Egyptian Book of the Dead
§12 Instructions for Hittite Temple Officials 47
§13 Purifying Offerings at Ugarit 49
§14 Certificate of Adoption 50

C. LEGENDS AND FOLKTALES 52
§15 Birth of Sargon the Great 52
§16 The Sun God and the Cow 53
§17 Birth of Iamus 54
  *Pindar, Olympian Ode*

§18 Birth of Cyrus the Great 56
  *Herodotus, Histories*

§19 Seven Lean Years in Egypt 59
§20 The Tale of Two Brothers 61
§21 Bellerophon 68
  *Homer, Iliad*

§22 Arion 70
  *Herodotus, Histories*

D. EPIC HEROES 72
§23 Enkidu 72
  *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

§24 The Legend of King Keret 75
§25 The Aqhat Epic 80
§26 The Baal Cycle 89

E. INSCRIPTIONS AND LETTERS 93
§27 Mari Letters 93
§28 Merneptah Stele 95
§29 Mesha Stele 95
§30 Tel Dan Inscription 96
§31 Deir ‘Alla Inscription 97
§32 Siloam Tunnel Inscription 98
§33 Sennacherib’s Prism 99
PART II
The New Testament Background

L. First-Century Jewish Groups

§55 Pharisees and Sadducees  
Josephus, Jewish War
Josephus, Jewish Antiquities

§56 Essenes  
Josephus, Jewish War

§57 The Qumran Community  
Damascus Document (CD)

§58 The Qumran Community, On Justification  
Community Rule (1QI).

M. First-Century Prophetic Figures

§59 The Samaritan  
Josephus, Jewish Antiquities

§60 Theudas  
Josephus, Jewish Antiquities

§61 The Egyptian Jew  
Josephus, Jewish War
Josephus, Jewish Antiquities

§62 An Anonymous “Pretender”  
Josephus, Jewish Antiquities

§63 Jesus, Son of Ananus  
Josephus, Jewish War

§64 Jonathan  
Josephus, Jewish War
Josephus, Life

N. Josephus on John the Baptist and Jesus

§65 John the Baptist  
Josephus, Jewish Antiquities

§66 Jesus  
Josephus, Jewish Antiquities
O. Messianism 189

§67 The Conquering Messiah
Psalms of Solomon 189

§68 Dual Messiahs at Qumran
Community Rule (1QS) 191
Rule of the Congregation (1QSa)

§69 A Jewish Prophecy
Josephus, Jewish War 192
Tacitus, Histories

§70 A Promised Child
Virgil, Eclogue IV 193

P. Roman Imperial Ideology 196

§71 The Good News of Augustus
Priene Calendar Inscription 196

§72 The Aeneid Prophecy
Virgil, Aeneid 197

§73 The Augustan Peace
Philo, On the Embassy to Gaius 198

Q. Birth Stories 200

§74 Augustus
Suetonius, Divus Augustus 200

§75 Plato
Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers 202

§76 Alexander the Great
Plutarch, Alexander 203

R. Parables 205

§77 Parables of the Kingdom
Gospel of Thomas 205

§78 Parable of the Lost Coin
Song of Songs Rabbah 206

§79 Aesop’s Fables
The Brother and the Sister 207
The Farmer and the Tree
S. Miracle Stories

§80 A Jewish Boy Calms the Sea
   Jerusalem Talmud Tractate Berakhot

§81 Miracles by Vespasian
   Tacitus, Histories

§82 The Healing God Asclepius
   Epidaurian Inscriptions

§83 Miracles by Apollonius
   Philostratus, Life of Apollonius of Tyana

§84 A Syrian Exorcist
   Lucian, The Lover of Lies

T. Ascension Stories

§85 Moses
   Josephus, Jewish Antiquities

§86 Enoch
   2 Enoch

§87 Romulus
   Livy, History of Rome

§88 Heracles
   Diodorus of Sicily, Historical Library

U. Double Dream/Vision Report

§89 Dreams of Aeneas and Latinus
   Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Roman Antiquities

§90 Dreams of Jaddus and Alexander the Great
   Josephus, Jewish Antiquities

V. Early Christian Worship and Rites

§91 Instructions for a Religious Association
   LSAM 20

§92 Instructions on Baptism, Eucharist, and the Lord’s Day
   The Didache

§93 A Roman Report on Christian Gatherings
   Pliny the Younger, Letters

§94 An Explanation of Baptism, Eucharist, and Worship
   Justin Martyr, 1 Apology
W. Early Christian Leadership 231
§95 A Decree Honoring Iunia Theodora 231
SEG 18, no. 143
§96 Instructions on Prophets, Bishops, and Deacons 232
The Didache
§97 The Role of the Bishop 234
Ignatius, To the Smyrneans

X. Household Relations 236
§98 Household Management 236
Aristotle, Politics
§99 Husband and Wife Relationship 237
Plutarch, Advice to Bride and Groom
§100 Spheres for Men and Women 240
Philo, Special Laws
§101 Marriage and Parenthood 241
Josephus, Against Apion
§102 Treatment of Slaves 242
Seneca, Moral Epistles
§103 Intercession for a Former Slave 244
Pliny the Younger, Letters

Y. Persecution and Social Harassment of Christians 246
§104 Nero’s Persecution 246
Tacitus, Annals
§105 Pliny the Younger’s Examination of Christians 247
Pliny the Younger, Letters
§106Alexamenos Graffito 249
§107 Celsus’ Polemic against Christians 250
Origen, Against Celsus

Z. Apocalyptic Literature 252
§108 2 Baruch 252
§109 4 Ezra 254

Scripture Index 257