

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 5, The Space and Time Perspective Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 5, The Space and Time Perspective, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Phillips's lecture focuses on Genesis chapters 6-11, covering the stories of Noah, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel. She explores interpretations of the "sons of God" and the Nephilim, considering both angelic and human perspectives. The lecture also examines the purpose and significance of Old Testament genealogies and the decreasing lifespans mentioned. Dr. Phillips draws parallels and contrasts between the Flood narrative and the Gilgamesh epic, emphasizing God's covenant with Noah. The lecture touches on the complex issue of Ham's actions and Noah's curse, as well as the motivations behind building the Tower of Babel. The lecture concludes by introducing Abraham's lineage, setting the stage for the next phase of the Old Testament narrative.

2. 23 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 5 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → OT Introduction → OT Lit).



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on05.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 5, The Space and Time Perspective

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided excerpt of Dr. Elaine Phillips' Old Testament Literature Lecture 5 on Genesis 6-11, focusing on Noah, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel:

Briefing Document: Genesis 6-11 (Noah, Flood, Babel)

Main Themes:

- **God's Judgment and Mercy:** The lecture highlights the interplay between divine judgment on human wickedness and God's persistent mercy and redemptive plan.
- **Importance of Individuals and Lineage:** The lecture emphasizes the significance of individuals and their genealogies in God's eyes, foreshadowing God's people being written in the Book of Life.
- **Interpretational Challenges:** The lecture addresses various interpretations and complexities within the text, especially regarding the "sons of God" and the extent of the Flood.
- **Comparison with Ancient Near Eastern Texts:** The lecture draws parallels and contrasts between the biblical narrative and other ancient flood narratives, particularly the Epic of Gilgamesh.
- **Covenant and Preservation:** The lecture emphasizes the covenant that God makes with Noah after the flood, guaranteeing that he will never again destroy the world by flood.

Key Ideas and Facts:

- **Genealogies in Genesis 5 and 11:**
- **Purposes:** To show God's concern for named people, establish relationships, and highlight the value of individuals in God's eyes.
- **Adumbration:** Genealogies foreshadow God's people being written into the Book of Life.
- **Not Comprehensive:** These genealogies are not intended to give a sequential or chronological accounting of time.

- Longevity: People in Genesis 5 lived into their 900s, except for Enoch, who lived 365 years and "walked with God and was not." The lecture posits that the cumulative effects of sin could be a reason for the age decrease by Genesis 11.
- **The "Sons of God" (Genesis 6:1-4):**
 - Three main interpretations are presented:
 1. The godly line of Seth intermarrying with the line of Cain.
 2. Fallen angelic beings cohabitating with human women. Phillips leans toward this interpretation, citing Job 38:7 and 2 Peter 2:4 as supporting evidence. She describes this as "something absolutely unthinkable...fallen angelic creatures...involved in an attempt to invade God's creation and thwart God's plan for redemption."
 3. Sociological boundaries being crossed; royal lines intermarrying with commoners.
 - **Nephilim:** The offspring of these unions, possibly "fallen ones," are described as "heroes of old, men of renown." The term is likely related to the Hebrew verb *naphal*, meaning "to fall."
 - Numbers 13: Spies exploring the promised land see the descendants of the Anakim who are related to the Nephilim. They felt like grasshoppers in their presence.
- **The Flood:**
 - Extent: While Genesis says the flood covered all the earth, the lecture considers the possibility of a localized, but still catastrophic, event, suggesting "all sometimes means all in a particular location, not everything everywhere." Geological evidence does not show evidence of a worldwide flood. Continental drift may also be a factor.
 - Duration: Rain for 40 days and 40 nights (a symbolic number); floodwaters for 150 days; the entire event lasted about a year.
 - Ark: The Hebrew word for "ark" is *teva*, which will be important later. The lecture highlights that Noah took two of every animal (and seven of the clean ones), implying a preservative measure and potential for sacrifice. God gave humans living creatures to eat in chapter 9.

- **Covenant with Noah:**
 - After the flood, Noah builds an altar and sacrifices burnt offerings.
 - God promises never again to curse the ground because of Adam.
 - The term *brit* (covenant) is first used in this context.
- **Comparison with the Gilgamesh Epic:**
 - Parallels exist (flood narrative). The hero of the flood is Utnapishtim.
 - Differences:
 - Shape of the ark: Utnapishtim's is a cube (unseaworthy), while Noah's has the capacity to float.
 - Motivation: Noah saves creatures at God's command, while Utnapishtim is focused on saving valuable things like silver and gold (self-serving).
- **Ham and Canaan (Genesis 9:20-27):**
 - Ham saw his father's nakedness and told his brothers.
 - Noah curses Canaan (son of Ham) after waking up.
 - Interpretations:
 - Simply seeing his father's nakedness was a shameful thing in that culture of honor and shame.
 - Phillips suggests that perhaps Ham had engaged in aberrant sexual behavior against his father: "maybe what Ham has done is to engage in some kind of aberrant sexual activity against his father." This might explain the curse on Canaan, whose people later "polluted the land" with aberrant behaviors.
- **Tower of Babel (Genesis 11):**
 - Motivation: Pride ("Let us make a name for ourselves") and fear ("not be scattered over the face of the whole earth").
 - Purpose: To reach the heavens.
 - God's Response: Scattering the people and confusing their language (measure-for-measure).
 - Connection to Ziggurats: Phillips connects the Tower of Babel to ziggurats, multi-level stepped structures where priests would meet with the gods.

- **Setting the Stage for Abraham (Genesis 11:26-27):**
- Terah had three sons: Avram, Nachor, and Haran. Avram (Abraham) will be the focus.
- The line of Shem is noted twice, highlighting its importance.

Quotes:

- "the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and now I'm going to change the NIV just a little bit because the NIV says they married any of them, a more literal rendition is they took as women, or they took as wives."
- "something absolutely unthinkable...fallen angelic creatures...involved in an attempt to invade God's creation and thwart God's plan for redemption."
- "all sometimes means all in a particular location, not everything everywhere."
- "maybe what Ham has done is to engage in some kind of aberrant sexual activity against his father."

Note: This briefing is based solely on the provided excerpt and does not represent a complete overview of Genesis 6-11.

4. Study Guide: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 5, The Space and Time Perspective

Genesis 6-11: Noah, Flood, and Babel - A Study Guide

I. Quiz

Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What are the two main explanations for Cain's worry about being killed, and where did he get his wife?
2. Define adumbration and provide an example from Genesis 1-5.
3. What are the three suggested identities for "sons of God" mentioned in Genesis 6?
4. What does the term "Nephilim" likely mean, and how does it relate to the potential interpretations of Genesis 6?
5. What does Dr. Phillips say about the Hebrew word "teva" and what is its significance in the Noah narrative?
6. What are two possible interpretations of Ham's actions towards his father Noah, and why is this passage considered challenging?
7. What are the two distinctively different things between the Gilgamesh account (Utnapishtim's story) and Noah's story?
8. What are the two motivations of the people building the Tower of Babel?
9. How does the decreasing lifespan from Genesis 5 to Genesis 11 potentially reflect the cumulative effects of sin?
10. What is the significance of the post-flood narrative and the first use of the term "Brit," the Hebrew word for covenant?

II. Quiz Answer Key

1. One explanation is that Adam and Eve had many children, including daughters. The other explanation is that there were other human-like creatures on the earth, descendants of whom Cain could have feared, and from whom he could have taken a wife.

2. Adumbration is foreshadowing an event that will happen later, possibly even in the New Testament. The garments placed on Adam and Eve to signify they are still God's children even after sinning is an example.
3. The three identities are: the godly line of Seth intermarrying with the line of Cain, fallen angelic beings, and a sociological/mythological account of royal lines intermarrying with commoners.
4. "Nephilim" likely relates to the Hebrew verb "naphal," meaning "to fall," potentially referring to fallen angels, morally fallen beings, or oppressively violent individuals. It complicates the interpretation because it is difficult to say which "fallen" is the correct association.
5. "Teva" is the Hebrew word for "ark." Dr. Phillips asks students to remember the word to make an interesting comparison, which she doesn't reveal, four weeks later.
6. One interpretation is that seeing his father's nakedness is a shameful act in a culture of honor and shame. The other more troubling suggestion is that Ham engaged in some kind of aberrant sexual activity against his father. It's challenging because the Bible isn't explicit, and it's difficult to determine what exactly the transgression is that results in the cursing of Ham's son, Canaan.
7. One difference is that God commands Noah to save creatures, whereas Utnapishtim is careful to take valuable things like silver and gold onto the arc. The other difference is the shape of the boat is Noah, more suitable for floating, versus the cube-shaped vessel built by Utnapishtim, which Dr. Phillips says would roll around like crazy.
8. The motivations were pride and self-sufficiency ("Let us make a name for ourselves") mixed with fear ("that we not be scattered over the face of the whole earth").
9. The decreasing lifespan may reflect the cumulative effects of sin on the physical body over millennia. The effects included mutations, disease, and an overall weakening of the human body.
10. It is in the post-flood narrative that God, in response to Noah's sacrifice, uses the term "Brit," meaning covenant. This marks the first formal use of the term and highlights God's promise never to curse the ground again because of Adam.

III. Essay Questions

1. Compare and contrast the three interpretations of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6. Which interpretation do you find most compelling, and why? How does your chosen interpretation impact your understanding of the subsequent flood narrative?
2. Discuss the potential reasons for the decreasing lifespans from Genesis 5 to Genesis 11. How do these explanations align with or challenge traditional understandings of the biblical text?
3. Analyze the parallels and differences between the Noahic flood narrative and the Gilgamesh epic's flood account. What does this comparison reveal about the unique theological perspective of Genesis?
4. Explore the ethical implications of Noah's curse on Canaan in Genesis 9. How has this passage been interpreted throughout history, and what are the potential dangers of misinterpreting it?
5. Examine the significance of the Tower of Babel narrative in Genesis 11. How does this story illustrate the tension between human ambition and divine will?

IV. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Adumbration:** Foreshadowing; something that looks ahead to an event that is going to happen later on.
- **Nephilim:** (Likely) related to the Hebrew verb "naphal," meaning "to fall," potentially referring to fallen angels, morally fallen beings, or oppressively violent individuals.
- **Teva:** The Hebrew word for "ark."
- **Brit:** The Hebrew word for "covenant."
- **Ziggurat:** A multi-level, step-leveled structure, often with a pyramid shape, used in the ancient Near East as a temple or place of worship.
- **Genealogy:** A record of descent from ancestors; a family tree.
- **Gilgamesh Epic:** An ancient Mesopotamian epic poem, one section of which contains a flood narrative with parallels to the biblical account of Noah's Ark.
- **Utnapishtim:** The counterpart to Noah in the Gilgamesh epic; the hero of the flood narrative in that story.
- **Shem, Ham, and Japheth:** The three sons of Noah.
- **Covenant:** An agreement or promise, especially between God and humanity.

5. FAQs on Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 5, The Space and Time Perspective, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Genesis 6-11: Noah, Flood, and Babel

- **What are some ways to interpret the identity of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6?**
- There are primarily three interpretations. First, they could be the godly line of Seth intermarrying with the ungodly line of Cain. Second, they could be fallen angelic beings attempting to corrupt God's creation. This view aligns with some extrabiblical Jewish literature like 1 Enoch and is potentially echoed in 2 Peter 2:4. Third, a more sociological reading suggests that the "sons of God" represent royalty intermarrying with commoners, thus crossing social boundaries. The lecture leans toward the second explanation.
- **Who were the Nephilim, and how do they relate to the "sons of God" and the flood?**
- The Nephilim were on the earth both before and after the sons of God procreated with the daughters of men. The term "Nephilim" likely derives from the Hebrew verb "naphal," meaning "to fall." They are sometimes translated as "giants." Some interpret them as morally fallen, others as oppressively violent. The lecture discusses the idea that the offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men were the Nephilim. The spies in Numbers 13 saw the Anakim, descendants of the Nephilim. The lecturer offers a few suggestions, not knowing how the Nephilim could appear after a world-wide flood.
- **Why did God send the flood, and what does the text emphasize about the state of the world before the flood?**
- God sent the flood because of the overwhelming wickedness and corruption of humankind. Genesis 6:5 states that "every inclination of the thoughts of [Adam's] heart was only evil all the time." Verse 11 emphasizes the violence and corruption on the earth. The use of the same Hebrew word for both "corrupt" (describing the earth) and "destroy" (describing the flood) suggests a measure-for-measure justice.

- **What is the significance of the word "teva" in relation to Noah's Ark?**
- "Teva" is the Hebrew word for "ark." The significance is alluded to in the lecture. The word will become important later to make an interesting comparison in a later lecture.
- **What are the different viewpoints on the geographical extent of the flood described in Genesis?**
- While the text states the flood covered "all the mountains" and "all the earth," there are different views on its geographical extent. Some interpret "all" to mean all of the habitable land in the Mediterranean basin. The lecturer notes that geological evidence does not currently support a universal, comprehensive flood across the entire earth. Continental drift is mentioned as another complication.
- **What is the significance of the covenant established with Noah after the flood?**
- The lecture emphasized that while God had made a promise earlier on, the term "Brit" is first used in the post-flood narrative. God promises never again to curse the ground because of Adam and gives all living creatures to Adam to eat.
- **How does the Genesis flood narrative compare to the flood narrative in the Epic of Gilgamesh?**
- While both narratives describe a great flood, there are key differences. In the Gilgamesh epic, Utnapishtim, the flood hero, is warned behind walls. The ark he builds is a cube, which would not be seaworthy. Additionally, Utnapishtim focuses on saving valuable possessions, while Noah is commanded by God to save creatures. These differences highlight the distinct theological and moral perspectives of the two accounts.
- **What are the different interpretations of the story of Noah and Ham in Genesis 9, and why did Noah curse Canaan?**
- The lecture posits a few possible interpretations. One is that Ham simply saw his father's nakedness, which was considered shameful in that culture. A second, more controversial interpretation suggests Ham engaged in some kind of aberrant sexual activity against his father. This might explain why Noah cursed Canaan, one of Ham's sons. The Canaanites were later encountered by the Israelites, and God described them as having polluted the land, possibly through aberrant sexual behaviors.