

Dr. Elaine Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 11, Giving and Receiving Torah 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 11, Giving and Receiving Torah, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Phillips' lecture explores the Old Testament's Torah, focusing on its nature, purpose, and relationship to ancient Near Eastern treaties. The lecture emphasizes the Sinai covenant and the importance of understanding the Torah as instruction. **She discusses the Ten Commandments as apodictic Torah, underlining their foundational significance, and the structure of the ancient covenants.** Phillips explains the categories of moral, civil/social, and ritual Torah, giving examples of each. **The lecture encourages deeper consideration of the Ten Commandments and the value of memorization of the Ten Commandments.** She analyzes each of the ten commandments to give the students a better understanding of them.

2. 41 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 11 – 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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on 11.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 11, Giving and Receiving Torah

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from Dr. Phillips' lecture on Treaties, Torah, and the Ten Commandments.

Briefing Document: Old Testament Literature, Lecture 11 - Treaties, Torah, 10 Commandments

Overview:

Dr. Phillips' lecture focuses on the significance of the Torah (particularly in Exodus), its structure, and its relationship to ancient Near Eastern treaties. She emphasizes understanding the Torah as instruction, not just law, and highlights the Ten Commandments as a foundational apodictic (absolute imperative) set of laws. She stresses memorizing the Ten Commandments and understanding their enduring relevance. The lecture also draws parallels between the covenant established at Sinai and Hittite suzerainty treaties, illuminating the cultural context in which the Torah was given. Finally, the lecture addresses the purpose of the Torah, in the context of social order and personal relationship with God.

Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Attendance and Engagement:** The lecture begins with a gentle encouragement for students to attend class and support one another, illustrating the importance of community within the academic setting.
- **The Torah as Instruction:** Dr. Phillips stresses that "The Hebrew word Torah comes from a verb that means to teach. And so, most properly, Torah means instruction. Yes, it's often translated law, but we want to think of it broadly as instruction." This framing is crucial for understanding the Torah's purpose and value. It is not simply a list of rules, but guidance for living in relationship with God.
- **Visual Tour of Mount Sinai:** The professor includes a visual tour to help understand the context of the biblical narrative. She speaks of the difficulty of the ascent of Mount Sinai, noting that "The ascent to Mount Sinai is not an easy one. Here you can see it's pretty rugged. Sun has now come up." She also alludes to the Greek Orthodox Priest to illustrate the point of Moses' continuous ascent up and down the mountain. "Exodus 19 is stunning in the number of times that Moses is up and down and up and down and up and down the mountain."

- **Importance of Context and Structure in Exodus:** Dr. Phillips emphasizes the significance of Exodus 19 as setting the stage for the giving of the Torah. God reminds the Israelites of His deliverance ("You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself") before establishing the covenant. She warns against glazing over when reading the legal portions of Exodus and Leviticus, urging students to "try and think in terms of all of these things being part of what God indicates that his covenant people need to do to be pleasing to him."
- **Covenant Theology and Suzerainty Treaties:** A major theme is the parallel between the Sinai covenant and ancient Near Eastern (specifically Hittite) suzerainty treaties. The Hittite treaties have a pattern:
 - Preamble (Exodus 20)
 - Historical Prologue (Exodus 19): "I carried you on eagle's wings; therefore, obey my covenant." This prologue reminds the people of what God has already done for them. It engenders a spirit of gratitude. "I'm the Lord your God who brought you out of the house of bondage, out of Egypt".
 - General Stipulations (Ten Commandments).
 - Specific Stipulations (Exodus 21-24): Laws about slaves, property, idolatry, etc. Don't boil a kid in its mother's milk.
 - Witnesses (Heaven and Earth): "That's why when you read the prophets and look for it, next time you start reading the prophets, the prophet is going to say, I call heaven and earth as my witnesses."
 - Curses and Blessings.
 - Provision for Keeping the Torah (Deuteronomy 31). Dr. Phillips argues that God chose to use a familiar form to communicate His covenant, but infused it with profound meaning. It was a form familiar to Moses. She addresses scholarship questioning Mosaic authorship, arguing that the presence of the historical prologue, unlike in later Assyrian treaties, suggests an earlier date and makes Mosaic authorship plausible. The Assyrians were brutal and thus would not elicit gratitude.
- **Apodictic vs. Casuistic Torah:** The lecture distinguishes between two types of Torah:

- **Apodictic:** Absolute imperatives, such as the Ten Commandments. Includes the Ten Commandments.
- **Casuistic:** Case law, conditional, outlining punishments for specific infractions (e.g., "If two men are fighting, and as they're fighting, they strike a woman who's pregnant, and her children come out...").
- **Purposes of the Torah:** Dr. Phillips identifies several purposes of the Torah:
 1. To reveal the holiness of God, his character of justice and mercy. "It says over and over and over and over and over again, especially in Leviticus, be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy."
 2. To reveal humanity's desperate neediness.
 3. To act as a "schoolmaster to lead us to Christ" (alluding to Paul's writings).
 4. To present guidelines for God's people to be set apart (e.g., Sabbath keeping, kosher laws).
 5. To ensure that social systems function appropriately.
 6. To act as a shadow of good things to come, setting our sights on the future when all things will be made right (shalom). "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming."
- **Three Categories of Torah:** Dr. Phillips proposes three conceptual categories for understanding the Torah:
 1. **Moral/Ethical Torah:** Demands on our hearts and wills (e.g., "Thou shalt have no other gods before me").
 2. **Civil/Social Torah:** Structures societal conduct and provides for the proper administration of justice.
 3. **Ritual/Ceremonial Torah:** Directs attention to God, facilitates worship, and reminds us that all of life is lived in God's presence.
- **The Ten Commandments:** Dr. Phillips emphasizes the fundamental importance of the Ten Commandments, citing their influence on society.
 - Each commandment should be memorized.
 - The first four commandments concern loving God.
 - The final six commandments concern loving neighbor.

- She points out that the two tablets of the testimony most likely contained the full text on both tablets.
- She provides explanation and commentary on each commandment, highlighting issues such as jealousy, idolatry, taking the Lord's name in vain, the Sabbath, honoring parents, murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, and coveting.
- No other gods before me.
- Shall not make idols. "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." This refers to a covenant and God has every right to be jealous when his people are dabbling with other gods.
- Do not lift up the name of the Lord our God to emptiness. "You shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God to emptiness. For the Lord will not hold guiltless anyone who does that." This is a warning against carelessness in using God's name.
- Sabbath command. Creation and redemption (remember that you were slaves in Egypt).
- Honor your parents. It can mean providing for parents.
- Do not murder.
- Do not commit adultery.
- Do not steal.
- Do not bear false witness.
- Do not covet.
- **The Importance of Practical Application:** The professor repeatedly refers to contemporary issues, relating the ancient texts to present-day problems. In the context of the commandments, "no other gods", she makes the remark about the objects we buy and the power we give to them.

Quotes:

- "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Torah."
- "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, how I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself."

- "The Hebrew word Torah comes from a verb that means to teach. And so, most properly, Torah means instruction."
- "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming."
- "You shall not lift up the name of the Lord your God to emptiness. For the Lord will not hold guiltless anyone who does that."
- "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God."

Implications:

This lecture provides a solid foundation for understanding the Torah, its historical context, and its enduring relevance. It emphasizes the importance of reading the text carefully, considering its structure and purpose, and applying its principles to contemporary life. The discussion of the Ten Commandments highlights their importance and their continuing challenge to believers.

4. Study Guide: Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 11, Giving and Receiving Torah

Old Testament Literature: Treaties, Torah, and the Ten Commandments - A Study Guide

Quiz:

1. What is the primary meaning of the Hebrew word "Torah," and how does this understanding impact its interpretation?
2. Explain the difference between Apodictic and Casuistic Torah, providing an example of each from the Old Testament.
3. How did God remind the Israelites in Exodus 19 of his work on their behalf before giving them the Ten Commandments?
4. Briefly describe the parallel between Hittite treaties and the covenant form found in Exodus, identifying at least three common elements.
5. What is the significance of "heaven and earth" being called upon as witnesses in the covenant form?
6. Identify at least three purposes of the Torah as discussed in the lecture.
7. How does the lecture suggest the Torah reveals God's holiness?
8. Explain the traditional understanding of the two tablets of the Ten Commandments. Then describe the alternative view presented in the lecture regarding the tablets' contents.
9. How does the lecture interpret the commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain, going beyond a simple prohibition of blasphemy?
10. What are two distinct reasons given in Exodus and Deuteronomy for observing the Sabbath day?

Answer Key:

1. The Hebrew word "Torah" primarily means instruction or teaching. This broad understanding encourages us to see the Torah not just as a set of laws, but as a comprehensive guide for life given by God.
2. Apodictic Torah refers to absolute imperatives or unconditional commands, such as "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13). Casuistic Torah, on the other hand, is

case law, offering conditional instructions with specific consequences based on circumstances, such as the laws concerning accidental injury (Exodus 21:18-19).

3. In Exodus 19:4, God reminds the Israelites that they have seen what he did to Egypt, how he carried them on eagle's wings and brought them to Himself. This serves as a reminder of God's power and deliverance before He establishes the covenant.
4. The Hittite treaties parallel the covenant form in Exodus through elements like a preamble identifying the suzerain, a historical prologue detailing past deeds of the suzerain, stipulations outlining the obligations, and the calling of witnesses to the treaty.
5. "Heaven and earth" being called as witnesses emphasizes the legally binding nature of the covenant. It establishes that God has a legitimate case against the people should they break the covenant, with the entire cosmos bearing witness.
6. The Torah reveals God's holiness, highlights our desperate need for guidance, and sets apart the people of God through specific guidelines.
7. The Torah reveals God's holiness through the overwhelming number of stipulations, the high standards it sets, and the declaration, especially in Leviticus, "Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."
8. The traditional view depicts Moses holding two tablets, each containing five of the Ten Commandments. The alternative view presented suggests that both tablets contained the full text of the Ten Commandments, representing two copies of the covenant agreement, one for the people and one for the sanctuary.
9. The lecture interprets the commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain as more than just blasphemy or careless speech. It includes the potential misuse of God's name even in prayer, using the Lord's name as a pause or comma in prayer.
10. Exodus 20 grounds the Sabbath in creation (God rested on the seventh day), while Deuteronomy 5 grounds it in redemption (remembering their slavery in Egypt and God's deliverance).

Essay Questions:

1. Discuss the significance of the historical prologue in covenant formation, comparing and contrasting its function in Hittite treaties and the covenant established at Mount Sinai.
2. Analyze the relationship between the moral, civil/social, and ritual/ceremonial dimensions of the Torah. How do these categories overlap and inform one another?
3. Explore the purposes of the Torah, addressing how it both reveals the holiness of God and exposes the desperate neediness of humanity. How does the Torah function as a "schoolmaster" leading to Christ?
4. Examine the Ten Commandments as a foundation for both individual morality and societal order. In what ways do the commandments address both our relationship with God and our relationship with one another?
5. Consider the enduring relevance of the Ten Commandments in contemporary society. How do these ancient principles continue to inform ethical decision-making and shape our understanding of justice and righteousness?

Glossary of Key Terms:

- **Torah:** (Hebrew) Instruction or teaching; refers to the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis through Deuteronomy) and, more broadly, to God's law and guidance.
- **Covenant:** An arrangement between two parties that establishes a relationship involving obligations on both sides.
- **Apodictic Torah:** Absolute imperatives or unconditional commands.
- **Casuistic Torah:** Case law; conditional instructions with specific consequences based on particular circumstances.
- **Suzerain Treaty (Suzerainty Covenant):** A treaty or covenant in the ancient Near East between a more powerful king (suzerain) and a less powerful vassal state.
- **Historical Prologue:** A section in ancient Near Eastern treaties that recounts the past actions of the suzerain on behalf of the vassal, intended to inspire gratitude and loyalty.
- **Epidictic:** An alternate spelling of Apodictic; absolute imperatives or unconditional commands.
- **Moral Torah:** Instructions that make demands on our hearts, wills, and very being. Deals with ethical and moral conduct.
- **Civil/Social Torah:** Guidelines for societal conduct and the proper administration of justice.
- **Ritual/Ceremonial Torah:** Instructions concerning designated times and sacred spaces for worshiping God, as well as reminders that all of life is lived in the presence of God.
- **Shalom:** (Hebrew) Often translated as "peace," but encompasses wholeness, completeness, and well-being; also related to a verb meaning "to pay" or "to restore."

5. FAQs on Phillips, Old Testament Literature, Session 11, Giving and Receiving Torah, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Treaties, Torah, and the Ten Commandments

- **What is the meaning of "Torah," and how does it differ from a simple translation as "law"?**
- The Hebrew word "Torah" comes from a verb meaning "to teach," and it's more accurately understood as "instruction." While it is often translated as "law," it's crucial to think of it broadly as instruction or guidance. In the covenant context, Torah refers to the statement of obligations for the humans who receive the covenant. It's unique in the ancient Near Eastern context because it combines both instructions and laws along with a narrative, which is not typically found in other ancient legal documents.
- **What are the different categories of Torah, and how do they help us understand God's instructions?**
- There are three main categories of Torah that help us to conceptually understand the various aspects of God's instructions:
- **Moral/Ethical Torah:** This encompasses instructions that make demands on our hearts, wills, and very being. They often involve matters between an individual and God and may not be adjudicated in a court of law. Examples include the first two of the Ten Commandments, like having no other gods.
- **Civil/Social Torah:** This category structures societal conduct and provides for the proper administration of justice. It deals with issues such as gender roles, slavery, property rights, and proper ways of interaction within the community.
- **Ritual/Ceremonial Torah:** This directs our attention to God and serves as an avenue for worship. It encompasses designated times, sacred spaces, and reminders that all of life is lived in the presence of God.
- **What are apodictic and casuistic Torah, and how do they differ?**
- **Apodictic Torah:** Consists of absolute imperatives or unconditional commands. A classic example is the Ten Commandments. It tells you what *must* be done.

- **Casuistic Torah:** Also known as case law, it is conditional and specific, describing what happens *if* certain conditions are met. It outlines resulting punishments for infractions under specific circumstances. For example, laws outlining what happens if two men are fighting and strike a pregnant woman.
- **What is the significance of the covenant established at Mount Sinai?**
- The covenant established at Mount Sinai is a suzerain covenant, which is an agreement between a sovereign (God) and his people (Israel). God reminds them of His deliverance from Egypt, emphasizing that He carried them on "eagle's wings" and brought them to Himself. In return, if they obey Him fully and keep His covenant, they will be His treasured possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. This covenant establishes a special relationship between God and Israel, with obligations on both sides.
- **How does the structure of the covenant at Mount Sinai parallel ancient Near Eastern treaties, specifically Hittite treaties?**
- The structure of the covenant at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20-24 and Deuteronomy) parallels the structure of ancient Near Eastern treaties, particularly Hittite treaties. The common elements include:
 - **Preamble:** Identifying the sovereign (e.g., "I am the Lord your God").
 - **Historical Prologue:** Recounting what the sovereign has done for the people (e.g., God bringing them out of Egypt).
 - **General Stipulations:** Broad commands or principles (e.g., the Ten Commandments).
 - **Specific Stipulations:** Detailed laws and regulations (e.g., laws about slavery, property, and idolatry).
 - **Witnesses:** Invoking heavenly witnesses (heaven and earth).
 - **Curses and Blessings:** Outlining consequences for obedience or disobedience.
 - **Provision for Keeping the Covenant:** Instructions for regularly reading and remembering the Torah.

- **Why is it important to memorize the Ten Commandments?**
- The Ten Commandments are foundational to ethical and moral understanding in Western culture, irrespective of religious belief. The principles within them are universal and provide essential guidelines for how individuals and societies should function. Understanding and memorizing them provide insight into the character of God, the nature of sin, and the standards God sets for His people.
- **Why does God describe Himself as a "jealous God" in the commandment against idolatry?**
- God's jealousy is not a negative trait like human jealousy but a righteous defense of His covenant relationship with His people. The covenant can be understood as a marriage covenant, so any dabbling with other gods is a form of spiritual adultery that breaks the covenant bond. God is jealous for the devotion and loyalty of His people because He knows that idolatry leads them away from true worship and into harmful practices.
- **What are some practical implications of the commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain?**
- The commandment against taking the Lord's name in vain means more than just avoiding blasphemous language. Some practical implications may include:
 - Being intentional and thoughtful about how we speak of God.
 - Avoiding frivolous or light-hearted references to God.
 - Praying with reverence and sincerity, avoiding the overuse of God's name as a filler word.
 - Taking oaths seriously and being truthful in our words.
 - Refraining from abusing God's name for personal gain or manipulation.