

Dr. Donald Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Lecture 6, End Of Royal Divinization, the Amorites

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This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session 6, End of Royal Divinization, the Amorites.

Welcome back. We are continuing our presentation, I hope in simple terms, trying to explain to you how the ancients thought in their world of religion as opposed to ours. Yesterday, I used some keywords that I will need to keep in front of you, and those keywords are words like control, manipulation, and sympathetic magic. What we saw in their thinking yesterday was the unique place of the king in how religion was designed to work.

And so, let me grab a marker. The thought pattern seems to be something like this. They conceived of these two worlds, and this world is the world of the gods, and this world is the world of humans, and what really separated them was some sort of chasm.

And so, what pagan thought was doing, apparently, was trying to figure out a way to bridge the chasm from this world to this world. Obviously, humans in antiquity could not get into heaven or the heavens, but because the heavens were filled with gods, gods could get into the world of humans. So what religion was designed to do was to reverse this arrow so that they could then bring the world of the gods into their world.

And so, what has been happening for several millennia is an increasing centralization in the person of the king. And what we have reached is this place where the king becomes the most important person in bridging that gap between the heavens and the earth. And what we saw last time is the place of this thing called the sacred marriage, where in this sacred marriage, the king could produce fertility for his land.

And in their thought, one did this by acting out magically what one wanted. Since the sexual act was a means of perpetuating fertility, you can't have children without a sexual act. Children represent fertility.

So, by engaging in sexuality with a religious figure like the high priestess of Ishtar, the king then magically could transfer to earth the prosperity that was so essential to their way of thinking about religion. So this is called sympathetic magic, and it's a case of the king magically acting out the desired intent. Human beings have done this, I think, in various kinds of ways, but all, I think, at their core, the same throughout the world.

And by magically acting out what a person wants, then they can create a situation favorable to the worshipper. So, what we tried to make in the point last lecture was the point that in the ancient world, they were not all that interested in aesthetics; they were interested in very concrete survival issues like prosperity and longevity. And so, the king had now been able to assume this all-important role as the grantor of prosperity and long life for his people.

So, this is a characteristic of paganism that I think makes its way through the Old Testament. Not because in the Old Testament tradition, we have kings who have assumed the role of deities, although we do have several places that fudge in that area, but because of this concept that through magic, you can actually transform situations so that the world of the heavens can be brought down or encouraged to come down into the earthly world. So, the control factors, the words are, human beings in pagan thought are in control of the gods somehow.

The way that they are in control of the gods is by manipulating the gods, and the philosophy of this is sympathetic magic. So, the Israelites seem to have been susceptible to these sexual rites which were common in the Canaanite world. For example, we know that there was sacred prostitution. We actually have a separate Hebrew word for sacred prostitution.

When Judah went down to visit, and he ended up with Tamar, he went down to find a kodshah, a sexual prostitute. So, they seem to think that people who were designated holy people could effectively bridge this distance between the heavens and bring about fertility. If I could do a little bit of further thinking before we leave this subject area, since I think it's at the core of why the Israelites were so susceptible to the Canaanite model, it would go something like this.

In cause-effect thinking, it's magical. If you can figure out the cause, you can produce the effect. So, in modern forms of Christianity, the cause of pagan thinking is that humans are in control, so the cause of pagan thinking can be human good works.

I remember when I had become a Christian 50 years ago, I ended up, along with my wife-to-be, in a very, very hyper-conservative Christian campus. There was nothing worse on that campus than either sexual sins or going to the movies. And if you went to a movie and you got caught, you were kicked out of school.

So, my senior year, I was home for the Christmas break, and I decided I wanted to see this movie. It was an erotic thriller movie. This has been 45 years ago.

So I remember sneaking into the movie theater, doing everything I could, waiting until the movie started when it was dark, and walking in and grabbing my seat. I was feeling nervous, and, well, to do away with the suspense, the erotic thriller was

Sound of Music. In that thriller, Julie Andrews had just fallen in love with the Baron, and she was kind of a wannabe nun.

She wanted to be a nun, but she didn't really have the ability to do so. So, she had now fallen in love with the Baron, and she was out in the garden in his mansion, and she was singing to God at this new turn of events that had shaped her life into just unparalleled joy. And as she was singing with that fabulous voice of Julie Andrews, she was singing to God about his blessing as I must have done something good.

There's a fine line between doing good works that God tells us to do versus thinking that by doing the good works, you can bring about divine intervention on your behalf. Isn't that just subtle how that can be? All of us are called to do good work. Paul himself said, don't grow weary doing well.

But pagan thought sees good works as the ability to manipulate God to produce a desired effect. And so, where we're at now in human history is that the king is the being who can manipulate the gods and bring about the desired effect. Well, this cause-effect thinking is effective only as long as the king produces.

And so, we mentioned last time that the king obviously could not do that perpetually. So, I mentioned in our class notes of some importance we deal with this question: how does this correlate with the Hebrews in general and the Western Semites in particular? Well, the divinization of kings never developed in the West. And I mentioned to you in red so that you'll be sure to see it; I mentioned to you in red the word topography because, in essence, topography is probably the reason why it never developed in the West.

There were not the massive populations in the West that we had in the East. The cities were smaller. The population was smaller.

It was more difficult to unite into large political entities. So, I think because of the different topography in the West, we have a decent explanation for why kings in the West were never divine. But I'd like to make a distinction for us before we leave this, and that is this.

There is a distinction between a divine king and a sacred king. Sacral kingship is the idea that a king is uniquely chosen by God. Both Mesopotamia and the West, including the Hebrews, had this perspective about their kings.

Kings were sacral. They were chosen by God. And therefore, only God was the being who could or should remove them from office.

You might remember reading in the biblical text the story of David and Saul. And in that text, you can't help but be impressed with the fact that Saul had, in numerous

ways, disqualified himself as king. Yet David could not bring himself to remove him from the throne because he was uniquely anointed by God.

That is, Saul was. Saul was anointed by God, and God would have to remove Saul himself. So, in the Western tradition, the king never assumed the exact magical status of being the unique bridge between heaven and earth.

But he was also different than all other people because in the West, the king, just as in the East, the king was chosen by God and, therefore, was uniquely holy and sacred. Now, holy doesn't always mean, in the way we use that word in English today, holy means he's, you know, the holier he is, the less sinning he has in his life. That's not really the way the word tends to work in the Hebrew Bible.

Holy in the Hebrew Bible is a word that means something at its base, more like uniquely set apart. Saul, as the first king, was uniquely set apart, and therefore, he was not to be harmed. So, this whole concept of the king as a magical figure is going to change very quickly in Mesopotamian history.

And so, what we're going to see is that when the Ur III period comes to an end, for the most part, the concept of divinization of kings will come to an end as well. Following the fall of the Ur III civilization, which you might remember from the previous class, was the end of the Sumerian civilization. There was a city called Isin where kings continued to be divinized, but there was no longer an empire, and these kings were limited to the city of Isin.

We also know that in southern Iran, at the site of Elam, a nation-state, kings continued to be divinized there as well. But the fact of the matter is, following the collapse of the Ur III civilization, then that was the end of the divinization of kings. The Elamites invaded Mesopotamia, sacked the city of Ur, ended the Ur III period, and so from that time onward, we have the collapse of the divinization of earthly kings in Mesopotamia.

Now, before I leave it, let me just tell you that there is a unique exception in the West, and that was what was going on in Egypt because in Egypt, right from the beginning of kingship, kings were not just divine; they were incarnate divinity. And in the unique Egyptian thought, each king was simply a reincarnation of the previous king. In that sense of the word, all Egyptian kings were divine because all Egyptian kings were incarnations of Amun-Re, the Egyptian sun god.

That's a unique divinization that occurred nowhere else in antiquity but in Egypt. So, the Ur III period comes to an end. This is the period that, time-wise, Abraham belonged in.

Abraham was born, according to the conservative dating system of the Old Testament, in 2166, which means that his lifespan correlated exactly with the Ur III period. Abraham left his homeland at the ripe young age of 65 or 66, thereabouts, pushing 70, and made his way to the West. But Mesopotamia, as he left it, entered into a period of several hundred years, and we're not going to talk about that simply because we need to move along in order to cover the contents of the course.

But for the next several hundred years, the Mesopotamian basin was divided, disunited largely north and south, but there were multiple political entities, and it was not until the rise of Hammurabi that Mesopotamia was united. So, the background of the patriarchal period is what I call the Old Babylonian period. So, setting our stage, the Old Babylonian period is primarily a period that can best be called Amorite.

Now, the Amorites are one of those people groups of the Old Testament that we read about throughout the Old Testament, but it's a little confusing. Actually, it may be a lot confusing. So, I'm not sure if I can get this across to you, but we have this word called Amorite, but it has multiple possible meanings, and only context can determine what that word actually means.

So, one of the common designations is that Amorite, or Amurru, is a geographical term, which in the language of the day just meant a westerner, someone from Syro-Palestine, if you will. This geographical perspective, therefore, had less to do with the people group and more from the fact that the Amorites were people who came to Mesopotamia from the west, the modern area of Lebanon and Syria. So, that was one of the designations or one of the meanings for the word Amorite.

A second possible meaning for the word Amorite is what I call the ethnic perspective. They are first mentioned in Sumerian tablets from the Old Akkadian period. Within another one and a half centuries, the Old Akkadian period at the time of Sargon the Great, right around 2350, so within another one and a half centuries, the inhabitants of Mesopotamia are forced to build a wall to restrain them or to keep them out of Mesopotamia.

Assyrian merchants up in southern Turkey, Cappadocia, have an occasional Amorite name, so they didn't just settle when they left Syro-Palestine, they didn't just settle in Mesopotamia, but they settled up in southern Turkey as well. By the Old Babylonian period, we can think of an easy date to remember when that period started because Hammurabi would have begun his reign in 1776, so that's a convenient date for Americans; it helps us remember it because of the foundation of our own country. So, they are synthesized with the local population, and so this is a people group that are called Amorites, and we'll talk about them in a little bit more.

There is a third group, or I should say a third designated meaning for the term. It's what I call the socio-economic perspective. In other words, in Mesopotamia, they would use the term Amorite to describe any foreigner who had moved into their territory, so it really wasn't talking about a very specific people called the Amorites, but it was used to describe any foreigner. Maybe a corollary term in our modern culture would be how we might use the word Mexican to describe people who have immigrated to our country.

In actuality, we sloppily use the term Mexican to describe any Hispanic, and some of those Hispanic people could be from Nicaragua or Honduras or other places, and Americans just sloppily use the term Mexican. Well, they seem to have used the term Amorite in the same way, so if in their population area there were foreigners, they called them Amorites even when they weren't necessarily Amorites. The one that interests us the most is the way the Bible uses the term.

The term Amorite in the Bible appears 86 times. All but 13 of those 86 appearances occur in the first seven books of the Old Testament. Well, that's because the Amorites belong in the earliest stages of the Old Testament, not the latest stage.

Now, what we can tell you is that there was a people group in the Bible that would be called Amorites, but interestingly enough in today's world, they are known better as the Hyksos. So let me see if I can explain this to you in a coherent way. I'm going to erase my board and try to explain the term Hyksos.

Hyksos is another word for Amorite, and I have it in our class notes up there. Hyksos is, of all things, an Egyptian word, and in Egyptian, I do not actually read Egyptian. It was one of my life goals to learn Egyptian, but as you can plainly see on the screen, I am running out of life to learn Egyptian.

It's an important language and Egyptian; this term means chiefs of foreign lands. Chiefs of foreign lands. For the first time in Egyptian history, Egypt was invaded by an outside power, and these outside people were called by them, in typical fashion, by the way, in terms of who their kings were.

So, they didn't call them by their ethnic name, which was Amorite. They called them, instead, in terms of their kings, chiefs of foreign lands, which is the word Hyksos. At a later date, much later date, a Jewish historian named Josephus, who in the great revolt against Rome, was a commander of the Galilean forces.

He survived that horrific revolt against Rome, became a Romanophile, and wrote a history of the Jews. In the history of the Jews, he came across the term Hyksos, but by Josephus' time, which would have been 68 to 70, and the years after 70, by Josephus' time, he had lost the meaning of the word Hyksos. And so, he read it as shepherd kings.

So, when you're reading older works on the history of Israel, you'll sometimes see these Amorite people referred to in Egyptian history as the shepherd kings, when in reality, that's a misreading of the term. So, this great Hyksos empire was actually Amoritic in origin, and so the Bible uses that term to describe them as people of Amoritic origin. So, if I can show you on the map, we'll use this one to illustrate what's happened.

I don't know how well you can see my cursor on the screen, but in the years, say, 1800 down to about 1600, the Amorite people who emanated from this region right here, the Amorite people had been able to create an empire that stretched all the way from this region up here, controlled all of Syro-Palestine, and ruled Egypt to about the middle of Egypt. This great empire the Egyptians came to call Hyksos, but in actuality, it was an Amorite period. So, these Amorites were a remarkable people.

They managed to create the world's first empire in Egypt that was not Egyptian. They conquered Egypt, made a lasting impression on the Egyptians, and then they also emigrated from this region up here in Syro-Palestine. Much earlier, they emigrated into Mesopotamia in the old Babylonian period.

So, it's very confusing, and the Bible uses the term Amorite in the kinds of ways that are confusing, because sometimes it means the people, and sometimes it means a geographical location. So, if I could return to my class notes then, I would try to show you that when the Bible uses the term Amorite, it means in part the people who were behind the great Hyksos empire which ruled Egypt. When the Bible wasn't using it that way, then it tended to use it as a counterpart to the word Canaanite.

So, I know this is a little confusing because it's like the Old Testament itself. There's so much to learn. It's just overwhelming. But the word Canaanite was also used geographically as well as ethnically.

And so, in the Hebrew Bible, Canaanite could mean a very specific group of Semitic-speaking peoples, or it can mean people who live geographically in the coastal plain. Amorite can mean a very specific Semitic-speaking people who came from the Syro-Lebanon area, or it could be used geographically for people who lived in the mountains of Israel. So sometimes Amorite simply meant not a people but the inhabitants who lived in the mountain range of Israel.

Canaanite could be a people, but it could also just be a term to describe the inhabitants of the coastal plain. So, the Bible uses the term Amorite a little bit similar to the way that the Mesopotamians used it, both geographically as well as ethnically. We should talk a little bit about these Amorite people before we leave this subject area, because they were a remarkable people.

People asked the question, the Egyptian Empire was one of the most impressive empires of all antiquity. It was certainly the longest-lived of all empires, perhaps on earth. The Egyptian Empire lasted millennia, nearly three millennia, two and a half millennia.

How is it that these foreigners from Syria-Palestine managed to conquer them? And how is it that they became prevalent in Israel itself? Well, there are some explanations which I can tell you that help explain. One of which is because the Amorites were physically larger than the inhabitants of both Canaan and Egypt. When we're able to find Amorite skeletons, what we find is that to speak in rough terms, they're about half a head taller than the other population groups.

In a world like theirs, physical strength played a bigger part in warfare than it does in today's world. In modern warfare, it really doesn't; most of the time, it doesn't matter how strong you are; it matters how many bullets your machine gun can shoot per minute. In the ancient world, this was a tremendous advantage in warfare because they were so much larger and stronger than the other population groups.

I would guess that the Egyptian build was that the average male was somewhere roughly, at the bottom margins, five foot, and at the taller margins, five feet six inches. So, to come across large numbers of opponents who averaged six feet gave these Amorites a tremendous advantage. But that wasn't all there was to it.

The Amorites had somehow gotten a leg up on technology, and they were able to introduce weaponry that made a huge difference in battle. They were the first people to introduce the horse as an animal connected to a chariot. In other words, they introduced chariot warfare on a large scale in Egypt, and the chariot was a terror weapon, especially when driven by horses.

Now you might remember in several earlier lectures, I showed you a Sumerian war chariot. Friends, that chariot was drawn by a donkey. Now, a donkey is a little beast, strong, but little.

The horse is, of course, powerful and strong, and can pull a larger chariot and pull it much faster. So, this gave the Amorites a tremendous advantage in war with the Egyptians. And, by the way, it would introduce a method of warfare that would continue to dominate the ancient world right down into the pages of the New Testament period.

A second important factor in why these Amorites were able to dominate their world, and, by the way, I didn't make it clear, but I can tell you that not only did they have an empire that ruled Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, but they became the dominant ethnic population in the empire of Hammurabi, the old Babylonian period. They were

remarkable people. A second major military invention that I don't know how to evaluate was more effective, but they created a brand-new bow.

In antiquity, bows were always made from single pieces of wood. Then, that wood could be shaved down so that it could be pliable enough to be bent. So, if you were looking at the bow, the bow might look like something like this, and then when the individual pulled the bow, the bow would stretch like this, and the physics of the act of shooting such a bow meant the power of the thrust of the arrow depended largely upon the strength of the person pulling the bowstring.

The further you could bend the piece of wood, the greater the velocity you could let fly with the arrow. Now, there were other factors that would, you know, for example, what wood were you using? Some wood inherently had more thrust to it than others, but largely, the thrust of your arrow depended on the strength of the person pulling the bowstring. Well, somehow, the Amorites had created or come across a new technology.

I'll give you a kind of a blow-up of it. As you can plainly see, you know why I majored in Hebrew and not in art. I have zero art skills.

But I'm going to give you a blow-up of what an Amorite bow looked like because what they did is they created a piece of wood that was laminated with various layers. These layers were then glued together and compacted. Most of the layers would be wood, and some of the layers would be bone.

But they created a weapon that had dramatically higher velocity than the simple single pieces of wood. Now, in warfare, this laminated bow was a tremendous advantage. You know, theoretically, you could have Amorite forces here and Egyptian forces here, and theoretically, the Amorites could let their arrows fly 20 yards further away than the Egyptians could reach the Amorites.

They could start killing large numbers of Egyptian infantry before the Egyptian bowmen had a chance to engage and reach them. This superior weaponry, between the chariot and the laminated bow, gave them a tremendous advantage.

They also created a more effective dagger, which meant that when they did close forces so that you were in hand-to-hand combat, this dagger gave them an advantage in hand-to-hand. The Egyptians employed a thing that was called a mace. And a mace, their primary weapon was a mace, and it was a piece of very hard, heavy rock, like basalt or something like that, in which they would drill a hole and insert a piece of wood.

And the way that the Egyptians fought their battles for a thousand years was relying largely on this mace head. And so, what you can see is that it was killed by blunt

force. You know, you would hit your opponent in the head and crush his skull and kill him.

Well, this is probably because the Egyptians did not have easy access to metal like some of the other cultures. The mace long outlived its effectiveness and was no match for the Hyksos' power. So, these Hyksos, or Amorites, simultaneously ruled Egypt.

At the same time, they were also part of the dominant ethnic group back in Babylon. They are remarkable people, hugely important in the Bible, but rarely do we know much about them. Let me tell you quickly how the Bible remembers them.

I have several passages here that I think it's worth taking a little bit of our class time to read. In Amos, who speaks about them from memory, he writes concerning God defeating the Amorites through Moses and Joshua, and he says, Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, though his height was like the height of cedars, and he was strong as the oaks. I even destroyed his fruit above and his root below.

God demonstrates to Israel his faithfulness to Israel by defeating the Amorites through the leadership of Joshua. I personally think that this has led to the confusion that is sometimes represented in English translations where certain words are translated as giants, and I have a suspicion that they weren't giants in any sense of that term. I think it's perhaps a reference to people like the Amorites, who were so much taller than the ancient inhabitants.

Whatever the case, they were one of the most remarkable people of Old Testament times, and God cites his defeat of them as an example of God's own greatness. We know another important passage about them in Joshua, and I turn you to Joshua 11.10 because there was a capital to the Amorite Empire. In Joshua 11.10, well, let's just read verse 9, and so Joshua did to them as the Lord had told him.

He hamstringed their horses and burned their chariots with fire. He's likely talking about the remnants of the Amorite Empire. Then Joshua turned back at that time in verse 10, and he captured Hazor and struck its king with the sword, for Hazor formerly was the head of all of these kingdoms.

Alright, I think with a very high level of probability that he's talking about Hazor, which was a city right about here, and he's telling us that Hazor was the capital of the Hyksos Empire. So, as you can see, Hazor, if you see where my cursor is at, is sort of equidistant between the northern confines of the Amorite Empire and the southern confines, which would be Egypt. Right in the middle was Hazor, the great city that Joshua captured.

In many ways, the greatest military event of the Israelites was the capture of the city of Hazor. We use the word tel, an Arabic word, and it means mound. In the ancient world, all of the ancient cities produced mounds.

As they built these cities, much of the cities were built of mud brick, but over the millennia, they would almost always build them on a hill. but over the years, the human population would build layer after layer of stratigraphy so that the mound would keep getting larger and larger, and the larger the city, the larger the mound. Well, the city of Hazor was such a powerful city that it's, I would say, three times the size of the next mound in all of Syro-Palestine. So, when Joshua captured Hazor, this was a protean event, but unless somebody explains that to us, I don't know how we would know that.

So, this was a great event to capture an Amorite city by the Hebrews because the Hebrews had none of the Amorite weaponry. The Hebrews did not have horses, they did not have chariots, they did not have laminated bows, and yet they were able to capture the site of Hazor. So, somewhat later, I'll show you a map of the great Hyksos Empire, but for now, let's turn our attention then and go back from the Amorites.

So, as I synthesize this for you, I know it's confusing. The Bible talks about them a lot. They were hugely important both in Mesopotamia and in the West.

They were the first people group to conquer Egypt, although not Egypt in its entirety. So, let's take that information and then go to the Old Babylonian period, which is a time period that would stretch from roughly 1800, 1776, down to about 1600, a little less than 200 years. So the Old Babylonian period is also occasionally known as the Isin-Larsa period [2025-1763 BC], and we aren't going to talk about that 200-year period from the collapse of the Ur III period because it's confusing.

I find it interesting, but we want to talk about how this reveals the Old Testament to us, so we're going to begin with Hammurabi, the Amorite. Now, the cuneiform sign can be read as a B or a P. So sometimes you'll see Hammurabi, and sometimes you'll see Hammurabi. It's because the cuneiform sign can be read B or P. It actually has a technical name called the B-P phonetic interchange because if you watch it on my lips, B and P, it's a sound that's made right here with our lips.

So, it was amorphous. I think it was probably Hammurabi, then B, but whatever the case. Hammurabi was an Amorite, or at least from Amorite extract.

When Hammurabi took the throne of Babylon, Mesopotamia was federated into multiple regions. That the area was ripe for conquest may be seen in this quotation, There is no king who can be mighty alone. Behind Hammurabi, the man of Babylon, march 10 to 15 kings.

As many march behind Rim-sin, the man of Larsa. Ebal-Piel, the man of Eshnunna. Amut-Piel, the man of Khatunum.

And behind Yarim-Lim, march 20 kings. Well, what that quotation is telling us is that when Hammurabi took the throne of Babylon, there were half a dozen political entities that pretty much balanced each other out. No one was powerful enough to control Mesopotamia.

Well, when a man like Hammurabi arises to a position of power, there are a large number of factors that must be considered. Perhaps one of the most important was the death of Shamsi-Adad, the king of Mari, during Hammurabi's 10th year. This clearly opened the way for a strong leader such as Hammurabi.

While he was not the first king of Babylon, he was the first Babylonian king to rule a unified Mesopotamia. So, it appears that what happened was this. Mesopotamia was federated, equally divided between half a dozen city-states, and when Shamsi-Adad, which shares a northern border with Babylon, when Shamsi-Adad died, that created a domino effect so that Hammurabi was able to take over that region.

He combined that region with his region and, one by one, succeeded in conquering those other city-states until, just like that, Mesopotamia reunited again under one political entity. Alright, so let's see if I can just refresh your memory by pointing this out then. The first empire to rule all of Mesopotamia was the old Akkadian Empire in the person of Sargon the Great.

That lasted from roughly 2350 to 2200 or so. Then, following that, it was the Ur III period, which went from 2150 to 2050. Now we have the old Babylonian period, which goes from roughly 1800 to 1600.

This is, therefore, the third empire that is ruling Mesopotamia, and the reason that it's worth pointing all of this out to you is that the old Babylonian period is the period in ancient history that best corresponds to the patriarchal period. In other words, people like Isaac and, Jacob, and Joseph fit better socially, religiously, linguistically; they fit into this time period that we would call the old Babylonian period better than any of the other earlier ones that we talked about. So, some contributions of the Hammurabian period I've listed for you.

Maybe I won't talk about these as much. The period of Hammurabi was a period that led to a dramatic increase in construction and architecture in the city of Babylon. Babylon was greatly enlarged, many temples were built, and canals were dug, so it was a time period of prosperity for the city of Babylon.

You know, these Amorites, we wish we knew more about them. They must have just been a truly remarkable people. At any rate, great strides were taken toward the development of a calendar.

For centuries, the calendar of the Mesopotamians was the lunar calendar and the way the moon appears is such that you cannot keep track accurately of what we call years through a lunar calendar. So, the Venus tablets of Amisaduka are moving toward a solar calendar, which is, of course, the one that we follow. Hammurabi is the greatest of the ancient lawgivers.

I would happen to think that Moses was far greater, but out of those who left us law codes, Hammurabi's law code is by far the most famous. It's larger than any of the other law codes. So, Hammurabi was a great king, and a great king left the law codes.

The Amorite worldview fits so nicely with the worldview of the Bible. Linguistically, Amorite is fairly close to Hebrew. As you can tell, my computer font can't read Hebrew, so I had written the Hebrew here, but my particular font couldn't read it.

But I was pointing out to my students through personal names how close the Amorite language is to the Hebrew language. We can see this in personal names, place names, and other evidence. So, linguistically, Amorite and Hebrew are sister languages.

Geographically, the connections with the patriarchs are impressive. For example, when we read important passages, which we'll talk about later, because later on we're going to talk about the homeland of Abraham and where he came from. But when we look at sites like Haran and Tel-Serugi and Tel Cheraki and Tel Nachor, these latter three sites are etymologically identical to forefathers of Abraham named Serug and Terah and Nachor.

So, we're just pointing out that the cities that are mentioned up in the northern part of Mesopotamia are etymologically identical to some of Abraham's relatives, showing you once again this similarity, this close relationship between Amorite and the Hebrew background. Socially, the parallels are truly impressive. We could cite several.

The gruesome passage in Judges chapter 19, in which, in order to get the Israelites to muster in the civil war, the Levite cuts his murdered concubine into 12 pieces and sends a tribe, a piece of her, to each tribe. Well, this gruesome practice, it turns out, as we know from Mari's examples, was a way of ordering tribes to send troops to the king, who was ready to conduct a military campaign. So, we have many such practices.

I think I'm going to hurry along because we're almost done with the hour that we have set aside for this lecture. A powerful area of similarity between the old Babylonian period and the Bible is economics. Crown land and its sale were similar.

The greatest landowner was the king. And the king owned most of the land and he used it to build an artificial patronage system. By giving royal land or turning it over to be used by his subjects, the king was guaranteeing loyalty to his followers.

So, we have a very interesting lecture to come on the famous Jubilee in the Old Testament. And I'm quite sure you're going to find that to be very interesting. When we compare the Code of Hammurabi, interesting things like interest and usury are absolutely identical to that of Moses.

In the Code of Hammurabi, if you charge more than 20% interest, that's usury. That's exactly the same figure that Moses gives in his law about interest. So, in fact, there are an enormous number of cultural, linguistic, and religious similarities between the old Babylonian period and that of the Bible.

And I'm looking forward to talking with you next class hour about the most striking parallel, that of the so-called Jubilee. We'll use that opportunity to pause here as we get ready to turn the next hour over to the discussion of this important economic practice. So, thanks for your attention.

This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session 6, End of Royal Divinization, the Amorites.