

Dr. Donald Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Lecture 11, Nuzi

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This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session 11, Nuzi.

In our last lecture, we talked about the Babylonian flood accounts and the flood accounts in the Bible.

As we were doing that, we couldn't help but notice that there are some very startling similarities between the biblical account of the flood and the various renditions of the Mesopotamian account. Of course, there are also substantial differences. That phenomenon certainly represents the conundrum that we face in the area of backgrounds.

The problem is that similarities are often matched by dissimilarities. As we discuss using ancient Near Eastern materials to illuminate the Bible, we face the problem of how to deal with undeniable similarities as well as differences. This is one of those test cases for the problem.

There are three proposals attempting to explain how two documents can seem so similar. The first is that the Hebrews borrowed their concept of the flood from Mesopotamia. Philosophically, this is unlikely.

There is demonstrable evidence that the Mesopotamian flood account tended to expand in size as it grew older, from general simplicity to complexity. Genesis 6-8 appears to have been the shortest of all the ancient versions of the event. On the other hand, it is much more complex chronologically than the others.

It has five dates, and they have none. It refers to six different periods of 7, 40, and 150 days.

While the Gilgamesh epic has only two or three of seven days each, there are 17 chronological data in the entire Atra-hasis and 13 in the Gilgamesh epic, yet the Bible, which is quite a bit shorter than those two other documents, has 16. Well, what we're pointing out is just one small problem in this problem of explaining interrelationships.

But there are chronological problems. If Moses was writing in 1400 and he was writing in Egypt or in the Sinai Desert, how did he become aware of the Mesopotamian flood accounts? It's difficult to posit the idea that Moses would have borrowed from a written document because, at this particular time, writing would

have been something in the hands of the professionals. So, it's difficult to understand how it could have happened in writing.

It's, of course, possible, although it must remain utterly speculative, that it could have happened orally. That is to say, in the ancient world, they were much more prone to pass things along orally, probably because of the complexity of the writing system. So, it's possible that Moses had heard about the flood account, but it's difficult to understand why Moses would have borrowed from a document that was so paganistic if he believed anything that was in the story that we have in Genesis 6-9.

So, it could have happened, but it seems unlikely, both for chronological reasons as well as theological reasons. If Moses borrowed from the Mesopotamians, that of course would explain the similarities, but that doesn't really explain the differences. And ideally, what we need is a system that can explain both the similarities and the differences.

So, it seems unlikely that Moses would have borrowed from the Mesopotamian account. If indeed there is a God, and this God does control humankind in endless ways, it's not impossible that God could have moved Moses to utilize this document. There just is no real evidence of that, other than the similarities we saw in our last lecture.

So, some conservatives perhaps would want to argue that the Mesopotamians borrowed from the Bible. Well, once again, it's an idea, but if we start looking at the idea and asking ourselves the question, how could this have happened? How could the Mesopotamians, who lived 600-900 miles away, how could they have borrowed the account from the Hebrews, especially given the fact that Moses is apparently the first person to write this down, and Moses never made it to Mesopotamia? So, it would be difficult to understand a proposed scenario in which the Mesopotamians could have borrowed this, not to mention the chronological problem, because if Moses wrote in 1400, we have Mesopotamian accounts that are already in existence.

So, Moses is writing two to three hundred years after the written editions of Atrahasis and the Gilgamesh Epic, so how would that work chronologically? And once again, that possibility of borrowing only answers one side of the problem, the similarities but less the problem of differences. So, what I would postulate is just a guess, but what I would suggest is a little scheme, and I'd like to make my point. I'd like to state my point with a certain degree of reticence. It's just a proposal to think about.

I don't have any proof of this, but let's suppose that there was a global flood, or at least a flood that covered the Mesopotamian basin. What I would propose is that

possibly both accounts, the biblical account, and the Mesopotamian account, remember the same event.

What I would propose is the possibility that through divine guidance or inspiration, Moses was led ultimately to a correct memory of that flood, whereas the Babylonians also perhaps remembered the flood event but got it distorted with mythology and other historical inaccuracies. In other words, they both remember the flood, but the bible account remembered it correctly, and the Mesopotamian account remembered it in a partly correct and partly distorted fashion. Now, this is, of course, at best, just a plausible explanation, but one of the factors in this that is attractive is that such an explanation explains why we have similarities and differences.

The Mesopotamian account remembered part of it accurately and remembered part of it inaccurately. So that is a situation where we have no way of knowing with any level of certainty, maybe even probability, how to explain the similarities and the differences. But I think the answer too often is put forward that there is borrowing.

Borrowing can certainly happen, but when we have cultures as far removed as Israel and Babylon, it's a little difficult to think about borrowing. Now I do understand in critical theory in critical theory. Much of the document that we call the bible was composed in exile in Babylon in the 6th century BC. Certainly, there is the possibility that something like that could have happened, but I would caution my audience to understand that while Israel was in exile in Babylon, and Israel could have been influenced by such documents, there is no hard evidence that that happened.

So that, too, is theoretical, as are all of these other proposals that we've been looking at. This much, I guess, then, as we look at it, we can look back and say, it does appear that all over the fertile crescent, there was a tradition of a great flood that destroyed the world of that era. The Bible remembers it, the Mesopotamians claim to remember it, and so that's kind of where we'll have to leave it.

We will move on to our second source of documentation from the old Babylonian period, which we call the Nuzi, or sometimes it's spelled Nuzu, tablets. These tablets are from a site in Nuzi at the foothills of the Zagros mountains. As soon as I can pull up my map—here we go—I can show you approximately where Nuzi is.

So, if we are looking at Nuzi, Nuzi would be somewhere roughly right about in this region here. Here's the Zagros mountains, remember that these are some serious mountains, and Nuzi was right about here, close to the Z and the A in Zagros. And so that's the site of Nuzi, and that's the area that we're going to talk about with these tablets that were found.

In the years 1925 to 1931, the American Schools of Oriental Research, when you see an acronym like ASOR, and you don't know what that stands for, let me remind you that at the very beginning of our class notes, I have several pages that have these in alphabetical order, so all you have to do is go to the very beginning of the class notes, look up alphabetically ASOR, and it'll tell you that this is the American School of Oriental Research. It excavated the site, which they were able to identify as Nuzi. It is not always easy to identify the name of a tell that you're excavating.

Thousands of tablets were found there which immediately elicited scholarly attention regarding certain patriarchal incidences in the Book of Genesis. The classical use of the Nuzi materials, and that is to say, when I say the classical use, what I mean is how the tablets of Nuzi influenced the understanding of multiple stories in the Book of Genesis. The classical use of these Nuzi texts is found in the commentary by Ephraim Spieser in the Anchor Bible on the Book of Genesis.

From 1935 until the early 70s, it was quite fashionable in scholarly circles to argue for the historicity of the patriarchal stories in Genesis on the basis of similar customs at Nuzi. Now, perhaps in my audience, I have some people who've had enough education to be surprised by the statement I just made. So let me just point it out for you.

We're here this morning at eight something in the morning, and so we're warming the engine up slowly. So let me explain to you. You read that correctly, that critical scholars were using the documents from Nuzi to argue for historical validity to some of the narrative stories in the patriarchal stories of Genesis.

We're used in today's world to having the critical community deny the historical accuracy of, especially in the Book of Genesis. So, we ask ourselves the question, well, how did that happen, and why would that happen? Well, it happened because the main or dominant subject area of the Nuzi tablets centers around scores and scores of adoption stories in the Nuzi text. These adoption stories were then read into the stories of Genesis.

Let's see if I can give you some explanations. First of all, when Abraham adopted Eleazar, that story was explained in light of Nuzi, even though the text doesn't say that he was Abraham adopted Eleazar. Eleazar was his faithful majordomo, his loyal chief slave.

The text never says that he was adopted by Abraham, but because adoption dominated Nuzi, then that was read into that story. This is especially used in the Jacob-Laban stories. If you remember the stories, Jacob had gone to Mesopotamia, ostensibly to get a wife, and there he runs into somebody who has even less moral scruples than he does, Laban.

So, if you remember the story, Jacob fell in love with Rachel, and he worked seven years for her, on the wedding night in a pre-electric era, Laban fooled him by giving his other daughter, Leah, and Jacob was oblivious to this until the next morning when he awakens to find out that he had been married to Leah, not to Rachel. Well, he worked another seven years, and the text is one of the delightful passages in the Bible; the text tells us that so great was his love for Rachel that the seven years seemed but a day. And so, at the end of that next seven-year segment, he had earned the right financially to marry Rachel, but because Jacob was being prospered by God, then Laban grew jealous of him.

And so, conflict arose, and finally, the whole family, that is, Jacob and Rachel and Leah and their children, decided to flee Laban and return to Canaan. As the story unfolds, Rachel had stolen the family gods, they're called teraphim, and who knows what else she had taken, but in the middle of the night, they start the journey back, and Laban wakes up, and at some time he finds out that they're gone, and so he pursues them. And so, when he finds them, when he catches them, he is adamant that they give back the family god, the teraphim.

It was a relatively common practice in the ancient world to have these clay images of portable deities, and they're called family gods, and they were kept in the domicile, so Rachel had stolen them. And so, it turned out that that long story that I just described to you was re-explained in light of Nuzi. And the explanation of the story was that Laban had adopted Jacob, and that the reason why Rachel stole the teraphim was that the teraphim were, we know from Nuzi, we're told, that the teraphim were documents for ownership of the land, that is to say, if you owned the family gods, you had proof that you owned the land.

Well, I remember being taught in my seminary class back in 1968, I remember I was taught what I just described to you in this whole story. What it was in essence is the story of Nuzi was extracted from Nuzi and imposed onto the story of Genesis. In fact, it was filled with holes because the text never says nor hints that Jacob was adopted by Laban.

Furthermore, there is no real evidence that even if Jacob had been adopted, which I reiterate the text doesn't say, but even if Jacob had been adopted, we know from the law in the ancient world that Jacob would have been removed from adoptive status the minute Laban had children. And the text tells us in Genesis that when Laban pursues Jacob, he pursues him with his sons. So, even had he been adopted, by that time, he would have been disenfranchised as an adoptee.

Furthermore, it's a misreading of the Nuzi documents to argue that the teraphim are the evidence, provide legal evidence of land ownership. That is an interpretation of Nuzi tablets that has come to be rejected. And so basically what I was taught in seminary turned out to be completely wrong.

What we would say about the so-called adoption formula examples from Nuzi is that all of these so-called parallels were created by the scholars who found the tablets and used them to explain the biblical text. It's exactly what I told you about the very first day of our lectures when I cited Samuel Sandmel in his article in the Journal of Biblical Literature. It's a case of parallelomania.

It's imposing artificial current finds onto the pages of the Bible. And so I can tell you as we get ready to start this journey now or complete this journey toward the literature of the old Babylonian period, for my part, in our previous lecture on Mari, it was a case of parallelomania to use the Mari tablets to explain prophetism because all that was focused upon were similarities, not the differences. I feel pretty passionate about the concept that if you're going to make parallels, you have to explain both similarities and differences.

So, at Nuzi, what we had was an interpretive era when American critical scholarship was utilizing ancient Near Eastern materials purposely to explain the Bible. Now, this leads us to a couple of things that I want to say as I move toward this bottom paragraph in front of you, one of which is to this very day, to this very day, every time there is a tablet or some other archaeological find, every time we go through this where it's as if the interpreters put on special glasses and with their special glasses, they then interpret the biblical text through the lens of the most recent finds in archaeological history. I've seen this happen with Nuzi.

I saw it happen with Mari at a later date. I saw it happen with Ugarit. We'll talk some about Ugarit.

It happened with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Every time we find an important tablet source, we then extrapolate it from its ancient context and superimpose it onto the text of the Bible. Now, as a practicing follower of Christ, or at least someone who tries to do that, I want to be careful not to violate the commands of my Lord, and I am told straightforward not to judge, but I must confess a suspicion that perhaps these sort of things happen because archaeologists can become very famous when they find things that correlate to the Bible.

You know, when Sir Leonard Woolley found the flood deposits at Ur and told the world he had biblical evidence, he had evidence for the archaeological evidence for the biblical flood, you know, that was back, I think, in the 20s. That made headlines all across the Western world, all across Europe, here in America. He became famous.

I can't help but be suspicious that one of the reasons why we go through this same thing every time we have tablet finds is because it's a temptation to the archaeologists to become famous, and I don't want to accuse anybody in particular, but since this happens every time we have a tablet find, I remember when the

archaeologists four decades ago or three decades ago found the excavators at Ebla telling us that they had found evidence of the name of Yafeh in the Ebla archives, that they found the name Yafeh in the archives at Ebla, which is in western, northwestern Syria. I sat in the audience when that was announced to the Society of Biblical Literature Participants, and the entire room, 5,000 people, were just buzzing over this news. Well, guess what? It turns out that it wasn't the name of Yafeh at all, and literally today, no one believes that Yafeh is mentioned in the Ebla tablets.

So, one of the things that I would like to make then in this comment about Nuzi is back in 1925 we were still in the real throes of using ancient Near Eastern materials like a dynamic flashlight to just cast light on the whole biblical world. And so that's part of the problem. The second part of the problem is much less visible, and I hope that I won't lose you or bore you on this, but in this paragraph, I mentioned to you practically all scholarship from the decades 1970 to 1980 came to reject the use of the Nuzi tablets to help prove the historicity of the incidences in Genesis.

The most substantial challenge to this was Thomas Thompson's work on the historicity of the patriarchal narratives. So, to recapitulate, let me explain that from the 1920s to the 1970s, we were in an era when Western scholarship, and by Western, I mean North American, was caught up in what was called biblical archaeology. Archaeology had as one of its major purposes to explain the Bible.

Well, if you're looking at 4,000 tablets and your presupposition is to use these tablets to shed light on the Bible, surprisingly, that kind of presupposition can get a person into trouble. Because your presupposition is that one of the primary values of the Nuzi tablets is to cast light on the Bible when in reality, the primary task of Nuzi or Mari or Ugarit, the primary task of interpreting the tablets, is to cast light on the people of the city where the tablets existed. So, what I would say as we look at this whole subject area is that we have a unique interpretive window in the history of ancient Near Eastern materials when North American scholarship was interested in using these ancient Near Eastern materials to explain the Bible.

So, if I could just take you on a 15-minute trip through the history of the church, then I can explain to you perhaps why this strange thing happened. As the Reformation period moved toward the end of its impact on Europe, it left an important legacy that demanded room for history and science. In other words, theology didn't stand on its own.

Theology needed to work in tandem with history. Well, what that meant is that people didn't automatically believe the Bible, but that the Bible perhaps should be proven accurate. And so, for centuries after the Reformation, scholarship began to move away from orthodoxy, and it sort of set the scriptures into their own category.

And while it was still largely believed to be a divine book, it now came under the scrutiny of historical proving. And then, in the middle of the 19th century, one of the great events in history occurred. Charles Darwin made his journey across the ocean, and in those travels, he came across what he saw as evidence for scientific phenomena that came to be called evolution.

In doing that, Darwin unleashed onto the world a further challenge to the biblical record because he finally gave to the world an alternative to God. That is to say, given a long enough period of time, life itself could emerge from chemicals. Life itself could emerge, and over a long enough period of time, life could morph into diversity until, given a long enough period of time, you could have life as we know it today.

Now, sometimes Christians have adopted that view of Darwin, and they accept what they call theistic evolution, namely that that kind of evolution happened, but God controlled it. Sometimes, Christians reject the whole concept of Darwinian evolution. But what I would say to you is that Darwin's theories, established in the second half of the 19th century, had a profound impact on Christianity because what it did seemingly slam the door on the biblical proposals for origins by coming up with an alternative proposal for origins.

As a result of that, in the century after Darwin, Christianity was dramatically affected by the teachings of Darwin to the point that there was vast abandonment of Christianity. By the turn of the 19th century, which is what we call 1900, virtually every church was influenced dramatically by the possibilities of a scientific alternative to the Bible. Virtually all Christian organizations and schools especially began the rapid departure from orthodox Christianity to a denial of the Bible as a legitimate document of origins.

And so, as a result of this, German scholarship began to have its own major impact, and it did so in the name of key scholars, Graf, Keenan, and Wellhausen. Now, what Wellhausen did, Julius Wellhausen, was that he was part of a group of German scholars who were able to take Darwin's theories and apply them to the biblical world. And what Wellhausen Graf and Keenan concluded is that just as humankind and all life on this earth developed from simple organisms over just endless time into the modern complex organisms that we are today, so too the world of the Bible underwent a similar kind of evolution.

This evolution followed the principles that Darwin taught us, namely, from simple to complex. Wellhausen and the German scholars, in particular, taught the world that just as life evolved from the simplest possible forms to complex forms, religion followed a similar pattern from simple to complex. And so, they created a literary evolution that has come to be called the J-E-D-P theory.

And J stands for the divine name Jaffe. You might remember in German that J and Y, in German J is pronounced Y, from that we get Jahweh. In your English Bible, as you know it as Jehovah, Jaffe is the real name.

E represents the divine name in the Bible, Elohim. D equals the Deuteronomist, which is best represented in the book of Deuteronomy in critical theory. And P represents the priestly.

And so, what Graf and Keenan, and Wellhausen did was popularize this concept so that the Jahwehist, who was a sort of simple primitive theologian, the Jahwehist did his work roughly in the 10th to the 9th century. These were editors in the Wellhausen system, they weren't authors. The Elohist is about the 8th century BC.

The Deuteronomist is the 7th to the 6th, and then this is the 6th to the 5th. Now remember that the 5th century is like 500 down to 400, that sort of thing. So, what they did is they created an evolutionary development of religion, and I won't necessarily spend a lot of time trying to explain this, but the result and the impact of this German scholarship, critical scholarship, led to the conclusion that there was very little historical value to the Old Testament.

What it led to was this evolutionary approach to religion; what it led to was the impact, unless ancient Near Eastern material can be cited to prove the historical reality of a story, then the story in the Bible was assumed not to be true. Assumed not to be true. Well, that created a skepticism that swept the Western world so that with the exception of churches, the scholarly world bought into this completely.

Now, it's a very complex thing, and I should tell you this today: very few scholars would say that they believe in this rigid formula that Wellhausen proposed. But the same idea is as current today as it was back then in critical scholarship, namely that there was an evolutionary development of religion that led to the world of the Bible. Now, you're wondering, how on earth is this functioning in the Nuzi discussion? Well, try to imagine that when World War I was fought, by World War I, this system had triumphed throughout the Western world, pretty much everywhere except in the churches.

The great schools of America, Harvard, Yale, and dozens of other schools that were founded in the Christian tradition abandoned the Christian tradition. Now, that's an abandonment that went back, that began earlier in the Reformation, but nonetheless, by the time of World War I, scholarship had come to reject much of the Old Testament. Well, if we think we've got this down, let me erase it, and let me tell you about a remarkable individual named W. F. Albright, William Franklin Albright.

Albright was certainly not an Orthodox Christian, although Albright was raised in an Orthodox Christian home. He grew up in South America in the home of his parents, who were missionaries. Albright left home, like many people do, and went to college.

And when he went to college, of course, he was educated in the tradition that I just had on the board for you, the evolutionary approach to the explanation for religion. And so, Albright took his doctorate, and he became the preeminent archaeologist of his era. As a matter of fact, I don't think anybody in the 20th century, that would be the previous century, I don't think anybody in the previous century cast as long a shadow in scholarship as Albright did.

He was arguably the dominant religious scholar or the dominant scholar of religious materials of the previous century. And Albright as an archaeologist, Albright began to come across frequent materials that led him to say, in essence, that the Wellhausen attitude toward the Old Testament is too skeptical. His archaeological work led him to conclude that the Bible fits fairly well into its world.

Now, because I teach this in class, I know that there is this tendency, so I'm going to tell you again, right now, crystal clear: Albright, as far as we know, was not a practicing Christian. He was a great scholar. But Albright came to believe that ancient Near Eastern materials showed a sympathetic connection to the biblical story.

And under his influence, Albright, who is this fabulous scholar, had students by the hundreds who went out into their scholarly world, and they used ancient Near Eastern materials in what, at that time, was called biblical archaeology. So the purpose, one of the major purposes of archaeology, then, was to cast light on the Bible. Well, that happened for about half a century.

In the 1970s, I read Thomas Thompson's book. It's a magnificent piece of scholarship. It's quite critical of historicity. He entitled his book *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*, and his conclusion was that there isn't any historicity.

But it's a powerful scholarly walk through the evidence, and basically, what Thompson showed in his book is that what is cited as evidence almost always isn't evidence. And so, it led to a whole new era, an era in which we are to this very day, called minimalism. Minimalism is so-called because its thesis is that there's only minimal interaction between the world of the Bible and the Bible.

It led to a complete change in how we look at the Nuzi materials. And what I was taught in seminary by perfectly good professors in this whole area of Nuzi turned out to have been wrong. Okay, so what I would propose to you is that we should have seen this coming because certain indications should have controlled how we use the Nuzi materials.

For example, there's a sense in which Nuzi is in the wrong place. All right, so if you look way over here to the Zagros mountain area, look how far removed Nuzi is from the world of Genesis. If I were to just guess the number of miles that this covers, I would say from here all the way over to here is 800, maybe a thousand miles.

Nuzi is really in the wrong place for there to be such parallels. So, it really is not the best place for this to have occurred. Secondly, Nuzi is the wrong time period.

Now, what we know is that the Nuzi tablets were written about 1500 BC. Well, if Abraham, by the conservative dating, is about 2100 BC, that's 600 years time removed. Even if we take a later date for evidence, which some evangelical scholars hold, namely that Abraham would have been an 18th to 17th-century person, it's still hundreds of years removed for there to be such close parallels.

It's the wrong time period. Third, it's the wrong population. The Hebrews are Semites.

All over the Mesopotamian basin, we're looking at people who are Semites. But the Nuzi population was not Semitic. It was largely Hurrian.

The Hurrians, or perhaps what the Bible calls the Horrites, the Hurrians were not Semites, and they didn't adopt the customs of the Semites always. And so the practices that were being done at Nuzi were the practices of people who were not following the culture of the old Babylonian world, which is where we have the similarities in the world of the Bible. So, what it tells us is just looking at simple things like place, time, and population should have caused us to be at least cautious about how we're using these materials.

But what I have seen in my own scholarship and the scholarship of many others is something very simple as well. The wrong presupposition will very often lead to the wrong conclusion. So, as we return to the Nuzi materials, let me explain to you, to be sure, the number one theme of adoption, which is the concept of adoption.

It's not the only major thing, but it's the number one thing. And so naturally, I want to take what I've learned about adoption and see how that helps me understand adoption in the Bible. Moses left us a few laws explaining how adoption works.

We do have adoption in the Old Testament stories. Adoption was a common thing in the ancient world because people died so early. If a man died on average, if a man died somewhere in his late 40s, his children would scarcely be in their early 20s.

So, it was not uncommon in the ancient world. And we know, by the way, when we get to heavily documented periods like the Roman period, we know that adoption

was a hugely common practice. But if you've got the wrong presupposition, it's like looking through binoculars that are out of focus.

So, here's the problem. Nuzi itself is not dealing with adoption as much as it's dealing with what's called fictive adoption. Now, you know how scholarship is.

Scholarship is never going to use a simple word when it can use an obscure word. I don't think I ever used the word fictive in my life until I came to Nuzi. I could have said fictional, but fictional isn't scholarly.

So, we call it fictive adoption. Well, fictive adoption simply means fictional adoption. It wasn't a real adoption.

It turns out that in the world of Nuzi, throughout the Mesopotamian culture, which was post-Old Babylonian, in that culture, it was illegal to sell land. So, what it turned out is that the Hurrians, the non-Semites, created a way around the law. And the way around the law was, if so-and-so were to pay me X amount of money, I would adopt so-and-so over here, and then he would become my son, and he would inherit my property.

It was a legal subterfuge. We know, for example, of one individual named Tehip-Tilla, who is adopted 48 times. Clearly, he wasn't adopted.

Clearly, this is a way around the law. It's what we call fictional adoption. Therefore, it is worthless in explaining literal adoption, as it occurs on various pages in the Old Testament.

So, what it led to, ultimately, was an abandonment of Albright's whole approach, in which the purpose of archaeology had as its primary goal to shed light on the Bible, to now what they call Near Eastern archaeology, where it has almost swung to the other extreme, as the pendulum made its way across the pages of history. So what I would caution anybody who listens to this lecture is that we need to read every tablet fine in the context of the people in whose culture those tablets were written. That is, the primary purpose of archaeology is not to find things that explain the Bible, much as we like it when things like that happen.

The point of archaeology is to reproduce the world of that time period, to reproduce our understanding of that world. So, with that in mind, what we can see is a very simple hermeneutical principle, which is, if you've got the wrong presupposition, the chances are really good you're going to end up with the wrong conclusion. Nuzi is a flagship case.

Virtually everybody in North America agreed with the Albrightian approach. Forty years after the 1970s, absolutely no one believes a thing on what we were taught

about the impact of the documents at Nuzi upon the book of Genesis. So that's why I will close this lecture by telling you we have to be careful in backgrounds that as we look at the material of the ancient world, we first look at it with the idea of seeing how this explains the world in which those tablets existed before we start trying to extrapolate that world and shed light on the Bible.

So that's our caution as we look at biblical backgrounds. And that caution is characterized by the truth, for backgrounds to work properly we must explain both similarities and differences. With that, we can finish this lecture and move on to another Old Babylonian source of information.

This is Dr. Don Fowler in his teaching on Old Testament backgrounds. This is session 11, Nuzi.