

Dr. Donald Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 6, End of Royal Divinization, Amorites Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 6, End of Royal Divinization, Amorites, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Donald Fowler's lecture discusses the end of royal divinization in ancient Mesopotamia, focusing on the Amorites. **He explains the concept of sympathetic magic** in ancient religion, where kings, through ritual acts, were believed to bridge the gap between the human and divine worlds. **Fowler contrasts this pagan worldview** with the Israelite perspective, highlighting the unique sacral kingship of the Hebrews. The lecture then **explores the Amorites' complex identity**, examining their diverse roles in Mesopotamian and Egyptian history, their military advancements, and their linguistic and cultural connections to the Hebrew people. Finally, **he connects the Amorite period with the Old Babylonian period** and the patriarchal era in the Old Testament.

2. 12 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 6 – 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 → Old Testament Introduction → Old Testament Backgrounds).



**Fowler_OTB_Session
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3. Briefing Document: Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 6, End of Royal Divinization, Amorites

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Dr. Donald Fowler:

Briefing Document: Old Testament Backgrounds - Lecture 6: End of Royal Divinization, the Amorites

Introduction:

This briefing document summarizes the main points of Dr. Don Fowler's Lecture 6 on Old Testament backgrounds, focusing on the end of royal divinization and the role of the Amorites. The lecture explores the religious thought of the ancient world, the concept of sacral kingship, the significance of the Amorites in both Mesopotamian and biblical history, and the connections between Amorite culture and the Old Testament.

Key Themes & Ideas:

1. Pagan Religious Thought: Bridging the Divine and Human Realms

- **Core Concept:** Ancient pagan religions sought to bridge the gap between the world of the gods and the world of humans, aiming to bring the divine into the earthly realm. This was achieved through practices intended to control and manipulate the gods.
- **Sympathetic Magic:** A central tenet was sympathetic magic, where actions performed by humans, particularly the king, were thought to magically influence the gods.
- *"By magically acting out what a person wants, then they can create a situation favorable to the worshipper."*
- **King's Role:** The king was the crucial figure in this process, seen as the primary bridge between the heavens and earth. The "sacred marriage" ritual, involving sexual acts with a religious figure, was believed to bring fertility and prosperity to the land.
- **Control and Manipulation:** Pagan thought often placed humans in a position of control over the gods, utilizing rituals to manipulate them for desired outcomes.

- **Relevance to Israelites:** The Israelites were susceptible to these pagan practices, particularly the sexual rites prevalent in the Canaanite world, including sacral prostitution.

1. Cause and Effect Thinking:

- Pagan cause-effect thinking focuses on humans being in control, while Christian thinking centers God's control and divine intervention.
- "But pagan thought sees good works as the ability to manipulate God to produce a desired effect."

1. Divinization vs. Sacral Kingship

- **Divine King:** The concept of a divine king, seen in some Eastern cultures (like Egypt), where the king is a literal god or incarnation of a god, was not common in the West.
- **Sacral King:** The Western tradition had sacral kingship, where the king is chosen by God and is uniquely set apart (holy). However, they were not considered divine.
- *"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 was chosen by God and, therefore, was uniquely holy and sacral."*
- **Example of David and Saul:** The story of David and Saul illustrates the sacral nature of kingship. Even though Saul was a flawed king, David refused to harm him because he was chosen by God and therefore sacred.
- **End of Royal Divinization:** The practice of divinizing kings in Mesopotamia generally ceased after the fall of the Ur III civilization, with exceptions in cities like Isin and Elam. Egypt was a unique case, as each king was considered an incarnation of Amun-Re from the beginning of kingship.

1. The Amorites: A Multifaceted People

- **Multiple Meanings of "Amorite":** The term "Amorite" has several meanings:
- **Geographical:** A general term for people from the west (Syro-Palestine).
- **Ethnic:** Refers to a specific people group that originated from Syro-Palestine.
- **Socio-economic:** A term used in Mesopotamia for any foreigner or immigrant.

- **Biblical:** The Bible uses the term in a similar way to the Mesopotamians, but also to describe the people behind the Hyksos Empire.
- **Hyksos Connection:** The Amorites are believed to be the same people group known as the Hyksos by the Egyptians. Hyksos means "chiefs of foreign lands," a label based on their leadership rather than their ethnicity.
- **Shepherd Kings Misnomer:** The term "shepherd kings" is a misreading of the word Hyksos that was made by Josephus, a Jewish historian.
- **Amorite Empire:** The Amorites created a vast empire that stretched from Syro-Palestine to Egypt, becoming the first non-Egyptian people to rule Egypt. They also became dominant in the Old Babylonian period in Mesopotamia.

1. Amorite Advantages and Influence

- **Physical Stature:** Amorites were physically larger and stronger than the Egyptians and Canaanites, giving them an advantage in warfare.
- *"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."*
- **Technological Advancements: Chariots with Horses:** Amorites introduced chariot warfare with horses (instead of donkeys), which was a more effective weapon than the donkeys previously used.
- **Laminated Bows:** They developed a more powerful laminated bow with increased velocity, giving them a significant edge in ranged warfare.
- **Daggers:** Amorites also utilized more effective daggers for close combat.
- **Biblical References:** The Bible references the Amorites and their defeat by the Israelites, emphasizing God's power. The defeat of the Amorites is a demonstration of God's faithfulness to Israel.
- *"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." - Amos*
- **Capital City Hazor:** Hazor was the capital of the Amorite/Hyksos Empire and a major city of their time, the capture of which was a significant event in Israelite history.

1. The Old Babylonian Period and the Amorites

- **Time Period:** Roughly 1800-1600 BC, this period correlates with the patriarchal period of the Old Testament.
- **Hammurabi's Rise:** Hammurabi was an Amorite ruler who united Mesopotamia under the Babylonian Empire.
- **Amorite Contributions:** The Amorite period saw advancements in:
 - Construction and architecture in Babylon
 - Development of a calendar
 - Law codes, notably Hammurabi's Code
- **Connections to the Bible: Linguistic Similarity:** Amorite and Hebrew are closely related sister languages.
- **Geographic Connections:** Place names in northern Mesopotamia are similar to those in Abraham's lineage.
- **Social Parallels:** Various social practices and customs were similar between the Amorites and what's depicted in the Old Testament.
- **Economic Parallels:** Similarities in land ownership, economics, and laws about interest rates.

Conclusion:

Dr. Fowler's lecture highlights the complex and multifaceted nature of the ancient world, particularly the interplay between religion, kingship, and culture. The Amorites played a crucial role in shaping both Mesopotamian and biblical history. Understanding these backgrounds provides valuable context for interpreting the Old Testament. The Amorite period provides important parallels and helps illuminate the social, linguistic, and economic realities of the patriarchal period. The lecture prepares the way for the next discussion of the Jubilee.

4. Study Guide: Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 6, End of Royal Divinization, Amorites

Old Testament Backgrounds: Lecture 6 Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What was the primary purpose of religion in the ancient pagan world, and how did they attempt to achieve it?
2. Explain the concept of "sympathetic magic" and provide an example of how it was used in the context of ancient religion and kingship.
3. How did the pagan worldview regarding human beings and gods differ from the biblical understanding?
4. What was the significance of the king's role in bridging the gap between the world of the gods and the world of humans in ancient pagan thought?
5. Explain the distinction between a divine king and a sacral king, and how this difference was manifested in the West and the East.
6. What factors contributed to the end of royal divinization in Mesopotamia after the fall of the Ur III civilization?
7. Describe the three possible meanings of the term "Amorite," according to the lecture.
8. Who were the Hyksos, and how are they related to the Amorites?
9. What were the main military advantages of the Amorites that enabled them to conquer Egypt?
10. How did the Amorites' technological advancements in weaponry, such as the laminated bow, impact their military dominance?

Answer Key

1. The primary purpose of religion in the ancient pagan world was to manipulate the gods in order to bring the divine realm into the earthly realm, with a focus on concrete survival issues like prosperity and longevity. They attempted to do this through rituals and magic, believing that they could control the gods to achieve their desired outcomes.

2. Sympathetic magic is the belief that by acting out what one wants, one can create a situation favorable to the worshipper. For example, in the sacred marriage ritual, the king would engage in a sexual act with a religious figure, magically transferring fertility to the land.
3. In pagan thought, humans were believed to have control over the gods by manipulating them through magic and good works, while in the biblical understanding, God is sovereign and humans are not in control of divine actions. Biblical understanding emphasizes reliance on God's grace and will, not manipulation.
4. The king was seen as the most important figure in bridging the gap between the heavens and earth in ancient pagan thought. Through rituals like the sacred marriage, the king was thought to facilitate the transfer of divine blessings and fertility to the earthly realm, ensuring prosperity for his people.
5. A divine king was seen as a literal god or incarnation of a deity, while a sacral king was considered uniquely chosen by God and therefore holy and set apart. In the East, kings often assumed the role of a divine being, while in the West, they were viewed as chosen by God, not divinized.
6. After the fall of the Ur III civilization, the divinization of kings largely ceased in Mesopotamia due to political fragmentation and the rise of new power dynamics. While some kings in specific cities like Isen and Elam continued to be divinized, the empire-wide practice ended with the collapse of the Ur III.
7. The term "Amorite" could refer to a geographical term for a Westerner from Syro-Palestine, an ethnic group mentioned in Sumerian tablets, or a socio-economic term for any foreigner residing in Mesopotamia. The Bible uses "Amorite" both as a people group and a geographical designation.
8. The Hyksos were an Egyptian term meaning "chiefs of foreign lands," referring to the Amorites who invaded and ruled Egypt. They were not an independent group but an Amorite empire controlling Egypt.
9. The Amorites were physically larger than other population groups, possessed advanced chariot warfare technology using horses, and invented the laminated bow, all of which gave them a military advantage. Their height and advancements in weaponry led to their military dominance.
10. The laminated bow, with its layered construction of wood and bone, allowed for greater velocity and range of arrows compared to single-piece bows. This gave

the Amorites the ability to engage and kill their opponents from a distance that their enemies could not match, leading to significant advantages on the battlefield.

Essay Questions

1. Discuss the concept of "sympathetic magic" as it relates to ancient religious practices, contrasting the pagan understanding of cause and effect with that of the Old Testament. Explore how these differing views of religious practice influence the relationship between humanity and the divine.
2. Analyze the significance of the king's role in both Mesopotamian paganism and in the Old Testament, examining how each tradition understands the king's relationship to the divine. Consider examples from each tradition to illustrate your points and explain the implications of these divergent viewpoints.
3. Compare and contrast the various meanings of the term "Amorite," as described in the lecture, and discuss the challenges in interpreting its use in the Old Testament. Explore the historical significance of the Amorites as both a geographical and an ethnic group.
4. Evaluate the factors that contributed to the military successes of the Amorites, focusing on their technological advancements and military innovations. How did these advantages allow the Amorites to establish dominance in both Mesopotamia and Egypt, and what lasting impacts did this have on the ancient world?
5. Analyze the cultural, linguistic, and religious connections between the Amorites and the Old Testament period. How do the connections provide insight into the patriarchal narratives, law codes, and economic practices of the Old Testament, and what implications do these similarities have for our understanding of the Bible?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Sympathetic Magic:** The belief that by acting out a desired outcome, one can create a situation favorable to the worshipper, essentially controlling the desired result through imitation or representation.
- **Sacred Marriage:** A religious ritual in which the king engages in a sexual act with a religious figure, thought to magically transfer fertility and prosperity to the land.

- **Divine King:** A king who is considered to be a god or an incarnation of a deity, holding a divine status and authority.
- **Sacral King:** A king who is believed to be uniquely chosen by God, set apart and holy, with a special relationship to the divine.
- **Ur III Period:** The last Sumerian dynasty, a period of strong central authority with a divinized king in Mesopotamia, which ended around 2000 BC.
- **Amorite:** A term that can refer to a geographical region of western Syria and Palestine, an ethnic group originally from that region, or any foreigner residing in Mesopotamia.
- **Hyksos:** An Egyptian term meaning "chiefs of foreign lands," used to describe the Amorite rulers who invaded and controlled Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period.
- **Laminated Bow:** A bow made with multiple layers of wood, bone, and other materials, glued and compacted together, which created a stronger, faster, and longer-range weapon than a single-piece bow.
- **Old Babylonian Period:** A historical period in Mesopotamia, spanning from roughly 1800 to 1600 BC, known for the unification of the region under the Amorite king Hammurabi.
- **Cuneiform:** An ancient writing system developed in Mesopotamia, using wedge-shaped characters made on clay tablets.
- **Tel (Tell):** An Arabic term for a mound, or artificial hill, formed by the accumulation of layers of settlement in ancient cities.
- **Usury:** The practice of lending money at an exorbitant or illegal rate of interest, deemed immoral in many ancient cultures.
- **Hammurabi:** An Amorite king of Babylon, who unified Mesopotamia in the Old Babylonian period and left behind a famous law code.
- **Topography:** The arrangement of the natural and artificial physical features of an area. In this context, refers to the landscape of the western and eastern regions, influencing the political structures.

5. FAQs on Fowler, Old Testament Backgrounds, Session 6, End of Royal Divinization, Amorites, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on Ancient Near Eastern Religions and the Amorites

- **What was the role of the king in ancient pagan religions, and how did they attempt to connect the human and divine realms?**
- In ancient pagan thought, there was a perceived chasm between the world of the gods and the world of humans. The king became central to bridging this gap. Through practices like the "sacred marriage" with a high priestess, the king was believed to magically enact and transfer fertility and prosperity from the divine realm to the earthly realm, a concept called sympathetic magic. This was a way to manipulate the gods to bring about desired effects, placing humans in a position of control over the divine.
- **What is sympathetic magic, and how was it used in ancient religious practices?**
- Sympathetic magic involves acting out or performing rituals that are believed to create a desired effect by mirroring that effect. For example, engaging in a sexual act was thought to magically produce fertility for the land. This concept stems from cause-and-effect thinking, where the correct action, often a ritualized one, can manipulate divine forces to bring about a specific outcome, such as prosperity or longevity. The manipulation aspect is a core feature of sympathetic magic.
- **What is the difference between a "divine king" and a "sacred king," and which concept was prevalent in the ancient Near East?**
- A "divine king" was believed to be a god incarnate or a direct extension of divinity, seen in the unique case of Egypt where each king was considered a reincarnation of the sun god Amun-Re. A "sacred king," on the other hand, was considered uniquely chosen by God, set apart and sacral, but not divine. Most of Mesopotamia and the Western Semitic traditions, including the Hebrews, embraced the concept of sacred kingship, emphasizing that God was the one who chose and, if necessary, removed a king.

- **How did the idea of divinized kingship decline in Mesopotamia, and what were the exceptions?**
- The divinization of kings in Mesopotamia declined after the fall of the Ur III civilization. Following this, only limited city-states, such as Isin, and southern Iran's Elam, continued the practice, with kings ruling over only limited regions rather than empires. The exception was Egypt, where the concept of kings being incarnate divinity persisted throughout their history.
- **Who were the Amorites, and what are the different ways this term is used?**
- The term "Amorite" has multiple meanings. Geographically, it refers to westerners from Syro-Palestine. Ethnically, they were a distinct people group first mentioned in Sumerian tablets. Socio-economically, it could describe any foreigner in Mesopotamia, not strictly the Amorite people. Biblically, the Amorites sometimes refer to the people behind the Hyksos empire that ruled Egypt, while other times they refer to inhabitants of the mountainous regions of Israel, or a counterpart to the word Canaanite.
- **What was the significance of the Hyksos, and what was their connection to the Amorites?**

The Hyksos were an Amorite group, referred to by Egyptians as the "chiefs of foreign lands," who invaded and ruled Egypt for a time. The term "Hyksos" was later misinterpreted by the historian Josephus as "shepherd kings." They established the first non-Egyptian empire in Egypt and significantly influenced Egyptian culture. They also had a major presence in Mesopotamia in the Old Babylonian period.

- **What were the military advantages that enabled the Amorites to dominate the ancient Near East?**
- The Amorites had a number of military advantages, including being physically larger than other populations. They introduced chariot warfare with horses, which was far more powerful than the donkey-drawn chariots of the Sumerians. They also developed a laminated bow which had greater velocity and range than the bows of their enemies. Their daggers were superior for hand-to-hand combat compared to the Egyptian mace.

- **How did the Amorite culture and period relate to the Old Testament, particularly during the patriarchal period?** The Old Babylonian period, dominated by the Amorites, aligns with the biblical patriarchal period. There are striking cultural, linguistic, and religious parallels between the Amorites and the Old Testament. Amorite is linguistically close to Hebrew, and geographical locations are linked to figures like Abraham. Social customs, economic practices, and even the concept of usury are similar to Old Testament traditions, suggesting the Old Testament has its roots in this period and area.