

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Genesis, Session 21, Patriarchal Chronology Continued, Abraham – Gen. 14 Resources from NotebookLM

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

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Genesis, Session 21, Patriarchal Chronology Continued, Abraham – Gen. 14, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture by Dr. Robert Vannoy examines the chronology of the patriarchal period in the Old Testament, focusing on the 430 years mentioned in relation to Abraham and the Exodus. He explores differing interpretations of biblical and extra-biblical texts, including Genesis 15, Acts 7, and Galatians 3, to determine the most accurate timeframe. The lecture also discusses the historical figure of Abraham, his geographical movements, and the significance of Genesis 14, which details a military campaign involving Abraham and several kings. Finally, it addresses the apparent anachronism of Philistines appearing in the narrative of Abraham, considering both critical and conservative viewpoints. The overall aim is to analyze the available evidence to reconcile biblical accounts with archaeological findings and establish a plausible chronology.

**2. 17 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Vannoy, Genesis, Session 21 – 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 →
Pentateuch → Genesis).**



**Vannoy_Genesis_Se
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3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 21, Patriarchal Chronology Continued, Abraham – Gen. 14

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts by Dr. Robert Vannoy:

Briefing Document: Patriarchal Chronology and Abraham as a Historical Figure

Subject: Old Testament History - Lecture 21: Patriarchal Chronology and Abraham

I. Introduction & Chronological Review

- **Key Issue:** Determining the precise dates of the patriarchal period is complex due to variations in biblical texts and interpretations.
- **Two Primary Variables Affecting Chronology:**
1 Kings 6:1 (480 years): Whether the 480 years from the Exodus to the building of the temple should be taken literally or schematically, impacting the date of the Exodus.
- **Exodus 12:40 (430 years):** Whether the 430 years refers to the time in *Egypt only* (Masoretic text) or in *both Canaan and Egypt* (Septuagint), impacting the overall time before the Exodus.
- **Septuagint Variant:** The Septuagint states the Israelites spent 430 years in "Canaan and in Egypt," often interpreted as 215 years in each. This division is supported by the patriarchal ages at key points (Abraham in Canaan 25 years before Isaac, Isaac in Canaan 60 years before Jacob, Jacob 130 years before moving to Egypt totaling 215).

II. Analysis of 430 Year Period

- **Arguments for 430 Years in Egypt:**
Genesis 15 and Acts 7: These passages are cited as evidence supporting a longer 430 year period.
- **Population Increase:** A more significant population increase is logically more compatible with a longer period in Egypt.
- **Galatians 3:17 and the 215 Year View:** This verse states the law came 430 years after the promise to Abraham, which is used by some to support the 215-year Egyptian sojourn.
- **K.A. Kitchen's Interpretation of Galatians 3:17:** Kitchen argues that Paul uses 430 as a well-known number, not necessarily a precise calculation of time, and not specifically connected to the Septuagint.

- Quote: “Paul in Galatians 3:17, is concerned to establish one single point, that the law came long after God’s covenant with Abraham. He therefore makes his point, not by laboriously calculating the actual interval between these events, but simply and incisively by citing the one well-known figure, for 430 years included within that interval.”
- Quote: “that Paul made use of the Septuagint interpretation of the 430 years is a gratuitous and unnecessary assumption where the wish of the modern commentary perhaps too often is father to the thought.”
- **Genesis 15:16 and Exodus 6:16-20:** These passages mention four generations and can be interpreted to support a 215 year time in Egypt. However, this interpretation relies on reading the genealogy very directly, which is not always the case in biblical texts.
- **Kitchen’s View of Exodus 6:16-20:** The text should not be read as providing an immediate descent from Levi to Kohath to Amram to Moses, but instead indicating tribal and family groups.

III. Vannoy’s Conclusion Regarding the 430 Year Issue

- **Preference for Masoretic Text:** Vannoy concludes the Masoretic text, with 430 years in Egypt, is the more reliable reading.
- **Interpretation of Galatians:** He accepts Kitchen's interpretation of the Galatians passage, that the 430 figure is a recognized length of time and is not related to the Septuagint's version.
- **Genesis 15:16 and Exodus 6:16-20:** Vannoy concludes these passages cannot establish a definite 215 year sojourn in Egypt as the genealogies are not always to be read as immediate descent and the 4 generations could be a period of about 400 years.
- **Basis for 430 Year View:** Vannoy cites Genesis 15:13 and 15:16, Acts 7:6-7, and the population increase in Egypt as the main arguments.

IV. Extra-Biblical Evidence and the Date of Abraham

- **Lack of Contemporary Extra-Biblical Evidence:** There is no extra-biblical evidence to definitively identify any contemporaries of Abraham from Genesis 14.

- **Genesis 14 and Mesopotamian Politics:** Kitchen suggests Genesis 14 fits the political patterns of Mesopotamia (small city-state alliances) between 2000-1750 BC.
- **Early vs. Late Exodus:** **Early Exodus (1446 BC)**, along with the 430 years of the Masoretic tradition, places Abraham's entrance into Canaan around 2091 B.C.
- **Late Exodus (1290 BC)** combined with the 430 years of the Masoretic tradition, results in 1935 B.C.
- The range of potential dates for Abraham's entrance into Canaan spans from 2091 down to 1720 B.C. depending on variables.
- **Vannoy favors the early date for the Exodus and the Masoretic text.**

V. Abraham as a Historical Figure

- **Geographical Movements:** Ur of the Chaldeans (Southern Mesopotamia): Considered his birthplace.
- Ur in southern Mesopotamia (excavated by Leon Wooley) dates to about 2070 to 1960 B.C.
- Haran: The family moved there from Ur.
- Canaan: Abraham moved through Shechem, Bethel, Ai, Negev, Hebron, and Mamre.
- Egypt: Fled to Egypt during a famine.
- **Wealth:** Abraham was very rich, not a poor nomad. He possessed significant wealth in cattle, silver, and gold.
- Quote: "Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold."
- **Numerous Servants:** He had many servants, some of whom were trained for military purposes.
- Quote: "when Abraham had heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, 318, and pursued them to Dan."

VI. Analysis of Genesis 14

- **Unique Military Narrative:** Genesis 14 is the only record of military activity by a patriarch.
- **Coalition of Kings:** The chapter lists kings and places such as Amraphel (Shinar), Arioch (Ellasar), Kedorlaomer (Elam) and Tidal (Goiim).
- There is a defeat of five kings of the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela (Zoar).
- **Amraphel and Hammurabi:** Historical attempts to link Amraphel to Hammurabi of Babylon are generally considered unlikely.
- Quote: "linguistically, there's no way to relate the names Amraphel and Hammurabi."
- Hammurabi is now firmly dated around 1700 B.C., which is late for Abraham using the early date of the Exodus.
- **Ebla Tablets:** While there was initial excitement about potential parallels between Ebla texts and Genesis 14, these are now largely disputed due to access issues, misreadings of the texts, and political issues.
- **Nuzi Documents:** There are cultural parallels between the patriarchal narratives and Nuzi documents regarding slave adoption, marriage, inheritance, etc., but these are circumstantial evidence since Nuzi is dated to about 1400-1500 B.C.
- **Kedorlaomer's Name:** The name Kedorlaomer appears to be of Elamite origin, linking to texts from that region.
- **318 Servants:** The number of 318 servants as a fighting force is comparable to other records from the region at that time period, and should be seen in context of a small-city state political system rather than a grand empire.

VII. Abraham and the Philistines

- **Genesis 21:32-34:** The text mentions Abraham's interactions with the Philistines, which is often regarded as an anachronism by critics.
- **Anachronism:** This is due to the widely held belief that the Philistines arrived in Canaan around 1200 BC, long after Abraham's time.

- **Counterarguments: Archaeological Silence is Not Proof:** The argument that the Philistines did not exist in Canaan during Abraham's time is based on silence, rather than positive evidence to the contrary.
- **Joseph Free (Archaeologist):** Free argues that the absence of evidence from archaeological finds doesn't mean that Philistines couldn't have existed earlier.
- **Fragmentary Nature of Archaeological Evidence:** Vannoy emphasizes that archaeological finds are often incomplete, and that future discoveries may yet uncover evidence of an earlier Philistine presence in Canaan.
- **Exodus 13:17:** A reference there that there was a known route near where the Philistines were located also could indicate that they were present prior to the generally accepted date.

VIII. Key Takeaways

- The chronology of the patriarchal period is complex with several factors that affect the dating.
- Vannoy favors the early date of the Exodus and the Masoretic texts.
- While extra-biblical evidence to definitively connect the patriarchal period is lacking, the biblical narratives are consistent with other records from that period.
- The mention of the Philistines in the patriarchal narratives is a disputed text, but not definitive proof that the text is incorrect as archaeological evidence is fragmentary.

This briefing provides a comprehensive overview of Dr. Vannoy's lecture, highlighting his arguments regarding chronological issues, his view of Abraham as a historical figure, and his engagement with questions raised by both biblical and archaeological evidence.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 21, Patriarchal Chronology, Abraham – Gen. 14

Patriarchal Chronology and Abraham: A Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What are the two variables that affect the dating of the patriarchal period according to Vannoy?
2. What is the significance of Galatians 3:17 in the discussion about the length of the Israelite sojourn in Egypt and Canaan?
3. How does K.A. Kitchen interpret the 430 years mentioned in Galatians 3:17?
4. What two texts are often cited to support the 430-year sojourn?
5. How does Vannoy respond to the idea that Genesis 15:16 and Exodus 6:16-20 supports the 215-year theory?
6. What does Kitchen say about the genealogy in Exodus 6:16-20 concerning Moses' direct lineage?
7. What is the significance of Genesis 14 regarding Abraham's lifestyle and his military involvement?
8. Why has the identification of Amraphel with Hammurabi been largely dismissed?
9. What is the anachronism associated with the mention of Philistines in Genesis 21?
10. How does Joseph Free respond to the argument that the mention of the Philistines in Abraham's time is an error?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The two variables are: (1) whether the 480 years in 1 Kings 6:1 are taken literally or schematically; and (2) the interpretation of Exodus 12:40, specifically whether it refers to 430 years in Egypt alone or in both Canaan and Egypt. These differences account for the differences in the dating of the Exodus.
2. Galatians 3:17 states that the law came 430 years after the promise to Abraham. Some use this to argue for a 215-year sojourn in Egypt, followed by 215 in Canaan

because if the promise to Abraham is the start date, and the 430 years is the total time to the Law, then that must also be 215 in Canaan before Jacob goes to Egypt.

3. Kitchen argues that Paul was not trying to give a precise calculation of the interval between Abraham and the law, but was instead using 430 years as a well-known figure within that larger time span. The 430 years should not imply the entire period from Abraham to Moses was only 430.
4. The two texts most often cited are Genesis 15:13, which speaks of a 400-year affliction, and Genesis 15:16, which refers to the fourth generation returning to Canaan.
5. Vannoy argues that the term “generation” in Genesis 15:16 may not indicate a strict generational span, but could be a period of about 100 years. He also notes that Kitchen suggests the genealogy in Exodus 6 is not a full lineage, making the generation argument less definitive.
6. Kitchen proposes that Exodus 6:16-20 gives the tribe, clan, and family group to which Moses belonged, but that Amram and Jochebed were not necessarily his immediate parents. He believes that the genealogy given is only partial and does not give a direct descent for Moses.
7. Genesis 14 portrays Abraham as a wealthy and powerful figure, not merely a nomad. The chapter reveals his military capacity and his ability to command 318 trained servants to rescue Lot.
8. Linguistic analysis and more precise dating of Hammurabi, through Mari letters, have made the identification unlikely. Hammurabi's reign is dated to around 1700 BC, which is too late for the earlier dating of Abraham.
9. The anachronism is that the Philistines are mentioned in Genesis as being contemporary with Abraham, around 2000 BC, but archeological evidence suggests they arrived in Canaan around 1200 BC. Many scholars believe this was a later addition when the Philistines were well known.
10. Free argues that the argument against the text is based on silence—the lack of archeological evidence of Philistines before 1200 BC. He contends that their numbers might have increased significantly around 1200 BC, with earlier smaller groups present. He does not believe an absence of proof is proof of an absence.

Essay Questions

Instructions: Write a well-organized essay responding to each of the following questions.

1. Discuss the complexities surrounding the chronology of the patriarchal period, including the various interpretations of key biblical texts and their implications for dating.
2. Analyze the significance of Genesis 14 in understanding Abraham as a historical figure, considering both his military actions and his economic status.
3. Evaluate the role of archeological evidence in confirming or questioning the biblical narrative concerning the patriarchs, specifically in the case of the Philistines.
4. Compare and contrast the arguments for the early and late dating of the Exodus, and explain how each relates to the dating of the patriarchal period.
5. Discuss how K.A. Kitchen's interpretation of Galatians 3:17 is meant to support a particular understanding of the biblical timeline.

Glossary of Key Terms

Anachronism: Something that is out of place in terms of time; especially, something that is chronologically incongruous.

Masoretic Text: The authoritative Hebrew text of the Old Testament, traditionally compiled by Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries AD.

Septuagint: The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, traditionally said to have been produced in Alexandria, Egypt, beginning around the 3rd century BC.

Patriarchal Period: The historical time period in the Old Testament associated with the patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Exodus: The departure of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, as recounted in the Book of Exodus.

Samaritan Pentateuch: A version of the first five books of the Old Testament, traditionally preserved by the Samaritans, a group that separated from mainstream Judaism. It often has readings that differ from the Masoretic Text.

Ur of the Chaldeans: A city in ancient Mesopotamia, traditionally considered the birthplace of Abraham.

Ebla Tablets: A collection of ancient clay tablets discovered in Ebla, Syria, containing valuable information about ancient Near Eastern history.

Mari Letters: A large archive of cuneiform tablets from Mari, a city in ancient Mesopotamia, that include correspondence related to the reign of Hammurabi.

Amarna Letters: A collection of clay tablets with diplomatic correspondence primarily from the 14th century BC, found in Amarna, Egypt.

Nuzi Documents: A collection of cuneiform tablets from Nuzi, an ancient Mesopotamian city, providing insight into customs, law, and society of the time.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Genesis, Session 21, Patriarchal Chronology, Abraham – Gen. 14, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on the Patriarchal Period and Abraham

- What are the primary chronological challenges when dating the Patriarchal period?** The dating of the Patriarchal period is primarily challenged by two key variables: the interpretation of 1 Kings 6:1, which states that 480 years passed between the Exodus and the building of Solomon's Temple. The question is whether to take that 480 years as a literal count or a symbolic one. The second challenge is the interpretation of Exodus 12:40 which, depending on the text, states that the Israelites were in Egypt for 430 years, or in Canaan and Egypt for a combined 430 years with a possible 215 years in each location. These textual differences result in varying dates for both the Exodus and the time of Abraham.
- What is the debate surrounding the 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40 and Galatians 3:17?** The debate centers on whether the 430 years in Exodus 12:40 refers exclusively to the time the Israelites spent in Egypt, or if it includes time spent in Canaan before moving to Egypt, as suggested by the Septuagint. Galatians 3:17 says the law came 430 years after the promise to Abraham. The question is, is that 430 years the whole time from Abraham to the law, or a well-known number within a larger interval. If the 430 years is the full interval, and that the time in Egypt was 215 years, that would mean the Israelites also spent 215 years in Canaan prior to moving to Egypt. Some argue, however, that the promise to Abraham was reaffirmed to Jacob just before he went to Egypt, so the 430 could be measured from that point. The common view is that Galatians is simply using the known interval of 430 years without claiming that it defines the entire period between Abraham and Moses.
- How does the genealogy in Exodus 6:16-20 relate to the debate about the length of the Israelite sojourn?** Exodus 6:16-20 provides a genealogy from Levi to Moses: Levi, Kohath, Amram, and Moses, which some interpret as four generations. This might suggest a shorter period, aligning with a 215-year sojourn in Egypt and a total 430 years, rather than a longer 430 years in Egypt. However, scholars like K.A. Kitchen argue that the genealogies in the Bible don't always list every generation. The biblical text is presenting family lines and connections and not detailed lineage information. Given this view, it becomes less crucial to determine if there were exactly four generations. Also, the size of the Amramite

clan at the time of the Exodus suggest there was more than four generations between Amram and Moses.

- **What is the significance of Genesis 14 in understanding Abraham's historical context?** Genesis 14 is significant as it describes a military campaign undertaken by Abraham to rescue his nephew Lot, providing insights into the political landscape of the time. It reveals Abraham's wealth, his trained fighting force of 318 servants, and the names of kings and places involved in the conflict. The chapter is unique because it's the only recorded military action of the patriarch. While there is no extra-biblical evidence to confirm the exact identities of the kings mentioned, the political dynamics of the chapter seem to fit with the alliances of small city-state kings in Mesopotamia around 2000 to 1750 B.C.
- **Why have some scholars tried to identify Amraphel with Hammurabi, and what are the issues with that identification?** Some scholars historically tried to equate Amraphel, the king of Shinar in Genesis 14, with the Babylonian king Hammurabi due to the similarity in names and the location of Shinar corresponding to Babylonia. However, linguistic analysis has shown that the names are unlikely to be related, with significant differences in consonant and vowel sounds. Also, Hammurabi is now dated to around 1700 B.C., making him a bit too late to be a contemporary of Abraham with a conventional dating for the Patriarch. Therefore, it is concluded that we have no extra-biblical record of Amraphel.
- **What are the challenges associated with the reference to the Philistines in Genesis?** The references to the Philistines in Genesis (such as in Genesis 21:32, 34, where Abraham interacts with Abimelech, a Philistine king) are considered problematic because the historical consensus is that the Philistines arrived in Canaan around 1200 B.C., which is after the generally accepted dates for the time of Abraham (around 2000 B.C.). This leads some scholars to label the Genesis reference as an anachronism, suggesting the texts were written at a later date when the Philistines were well known. However, some scholars suggest it's possible that a smaller group of Philistines may have existed in Canaan earlier with the larger well-known influx happening at about 1200 B.C.

- **How does the "fragmentary nature of archeological findings" affect the dating and historical understanding of the Patriarchal period?** The "fragmentary nature of archeological findings" means that our historical understanding is based on limited data. The lack of extra-biblical evidence to corroborate certain biblical claims does not necessarily indicate that the biblical accounts are false. It's entirely possible, for example, that there were Philistines in Canaan earlier than currently thought, but we just haven't found evidence to that effect. Many factors determine what artifacts and records are preserved over time. Just because an archeological record has not been found does not mean that an event did not occur or that biblical account of that event is inaccurate.
- **What are the implications of choosing an early or late date for the Exodus for the dating of Abraham?** The early date of the Exodus (around 1446 B.C.) and the Masoretic text's 430 years for the Egyptian sojourn leads to an Abrahamic date around 2091 B.C. The late date of the Exodus (around 1290 B.C.) along with the Masoretic text leads to an Abrahamic date around 1935 B.C. Using the Septuagint's number of 430 years in Egypt and Canaan shifts the Abrahamic dates to 1876 and 1720 B.C. respectively. Thus, the dating of the Exodus plays a significant role in when we place Abraham in history. The sources lean towards the early date of the Exodus and the Masoretic text.